BONNIE GREER THE PROBLEM WITH BERNIE SANDERS

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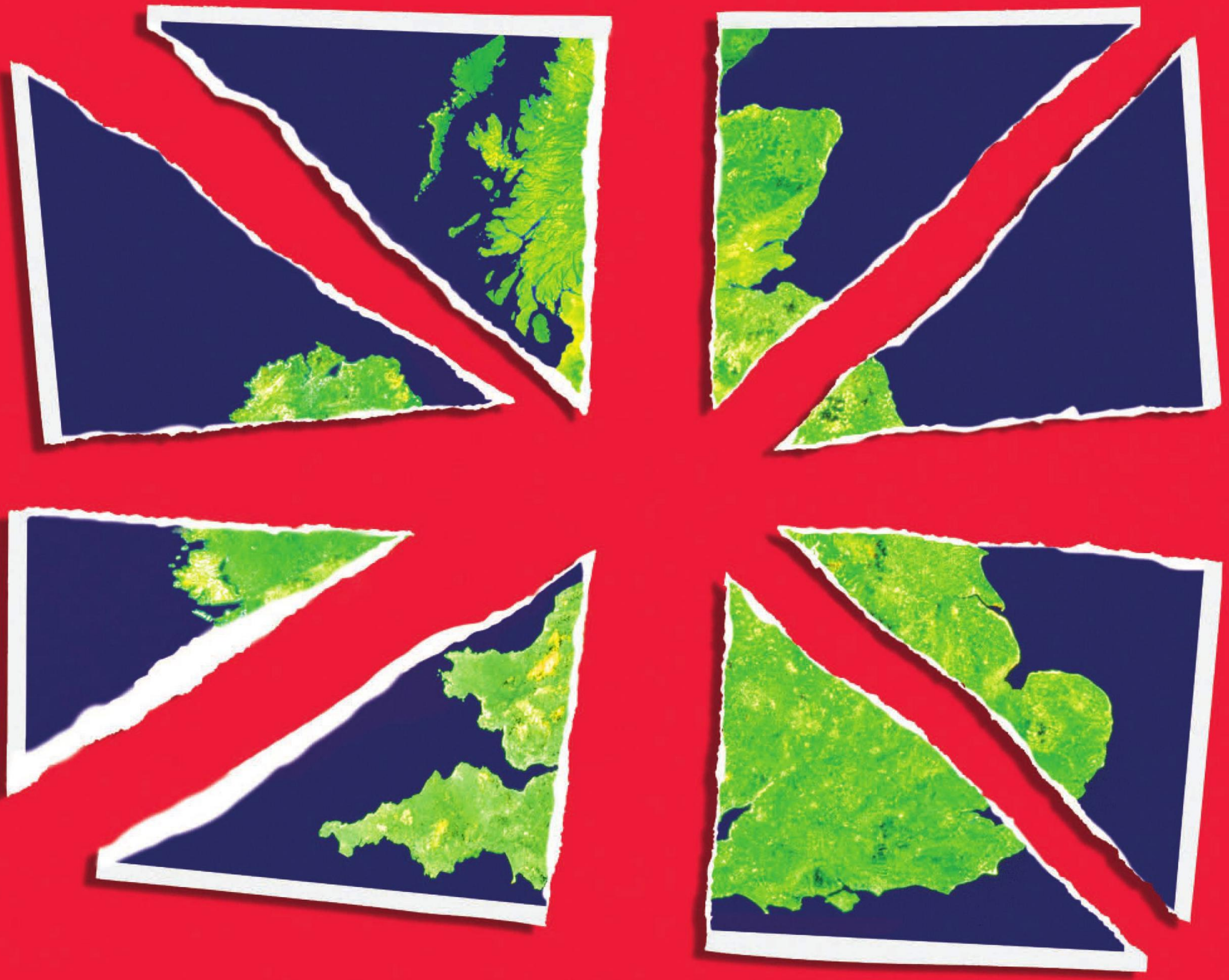

TORN APART

SPECIAL REPORT IS THIS THE END FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM?

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In praise of (some) superforecasters

Andrew Adonis

Maybe like you, dear reader, I had never heard of 'superforecasting' until Andrew Sabisky, a practitioner of it, appeared in 10 Downing Street this week, disappearing a few days later once his repugnant right-wing views on eugenics, race and women hit the media.

An angry Dominic Cummings, who hired him, told journalists questioning his recruitment that they should read Philip Tetlock, a University of Pennsylvania political science professor who invented the discipline.

So I have read Tetlock. And what I learn is that superforecasting is a reputable attempt to apply modern analytical and statistical practice to the art of forecasting events. It seeks to do to prediction what opinion polling did to social surveying a generation ago: to turn an art – or worse, decisions by pure hunch – into something more of a science.

By comparing trained superforecasters with people who are simply knowledgeable about a particular sphere, but not about probabilities and event patterns, Tetlock shows that they consistently outperform the 'experts' in predicting the likelihood of events. In his graphic phrase, prediction without applying superforecasting techniques is "roughly as accurate as a dart-throwing chimpanzee".

This is commendable. Aid agencies, for example, now apply superforecasting to identifying the likelihood of droughts becoming famines. Nato strategists are using it to predict the likelihood of Russia invading Estonia. Political scientists can use it to predict when chancellor Merkel will eventually retire and the likelihood of Trump getting a second term. It is all done in the form of constantly changing probabilities.

As a subscriber to the mantra that 'without data you are just another person with an opinion', I like the idea of superforecasting and I confess I hadn't realised it was a specific discipline with a growing track record, including a club of grand master superforcasters called The Good Judgement Project.

We should indeed apply superforecasting more systematically to government. Like systematic opinion polling, it is an aid to decision-makers and informed debate. It is ideologically neutral, unless you have a bias in favour of ignorance. This is all good. Thank you, Mr Cummings.

However, this alone does not explain the recruitment of Sabisky, who as well as being a superforecaster is extremely right-wing. He is a younger Cummings: a bright disruptor with controversial views about elitism, populism and eugenics which tilt at the establishment in the name of, well, a new establishment promoted by angry iconoclasts like Cummings and Steve Bannon.

For Cummings and his superforecasters are not, as they claim, objectively applying science to government and politics. Rather, they are taking their right-wing prejudices and using modern predictive, marketing and social media methods to work out which ones they can get past the electorate, courtesy of Boris Johnson who latched on to Cummings precisely because he was so effective at so doing.

This is how we ended up with Brexit, which Cummings predicted early on could be turned into an anti-establishment and anti-immigrant triumph against distant elites fiddling while Rome burned after the 2008 recession.

Cummings has created his own sub-discipline of superforecasting which predicts which established institutions or projects can be brought down most easily to create space for new right-wingery. In the last week alone he has launched attacks against the Treasury, HS2 and the BBC.

The anti-Treasury tilt succeeded in destroying a cautious chancellor, Sajid Javid. Anti-HS2 failed because Johnson likes big infrastructure projects and over-ruled his adviser, although he was correct about its vulnerability – like all big infrastructure – to cost overruns and temporary unpopularity. As for the battle against the BBC, that is work in progress.

The weakness of this approach is becoming steadily clearer. Cummings is good at destroying, and at marshalling more techniques to dismantle the existing fabric in the name of populism. But he doesn't have much idea what to put in its place. Or rather, the sort of Sabisky things he may want to put in its place aren't what a majority of the voters remotely want.

My superforecast? Iconoclasts like Cummings rarely last long. They get bored, disillusioned and overreach. But he has lasted far longer than is healthy, thanks to the Labour leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, whose failure required no superforecaster. And he may do a lot more damage yet.

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The road to rupture

What now for future of the UK?

Brexit and other political developments mean the obituaries for the United Kingdom are already being written. MAURICE SMITH assesses whether they will prove premature

Imagine the United Kingdom as a soap opera – one of those dramas where the main characters are in a permanent state of dismay, and always seem to ready to walk out... forever.

Apparently we have reached just such a moment, here and now. The script writers are preparing their drafts. Brexit is happening. The Scots are talking the talk, and the Irish – who walked a century ago – might be returning for the ones they left behind.

The ingredients of melodrama are plain. Bad Boris has taken charge, so Nicola is ready to flounce off muttering about the broken promises of 2014. Arlene backed Boris but now she wonders why she ever trusted him or his predecessor, Theresa. Over the border, Mary Lou is all set to move in and that might upset, well, nearly everyone.

In the parlance of these times, the Great British Break-up seems oven ready. The arrival in Downing Street of an essentially English Tory in Boris Johnson, reinforced with an impervious majority in December, runs counter to the prevailing political winds of Scotland and Ireland.

While Johnson and his Leave cronies connived to achieve Brexit back in 2016, voters in Scotland backed Remain by a margin of 62% to 38%. Northern Ireland voted in similar vein (56% to 44%). For more than three years both electorates have watched in dismay while the real Brexit battles were played out in England.

In Northern Ireland there has been the added piquancy that Leave was promoted by the region's biggest party, the DUP, even though a majority of voters opposed it.

So now, as the smoke of battle clears and the Westminster benches fill with newly-elected Tories, are we set for Scottish independence and a united Ireland?

Can it all be so simple?

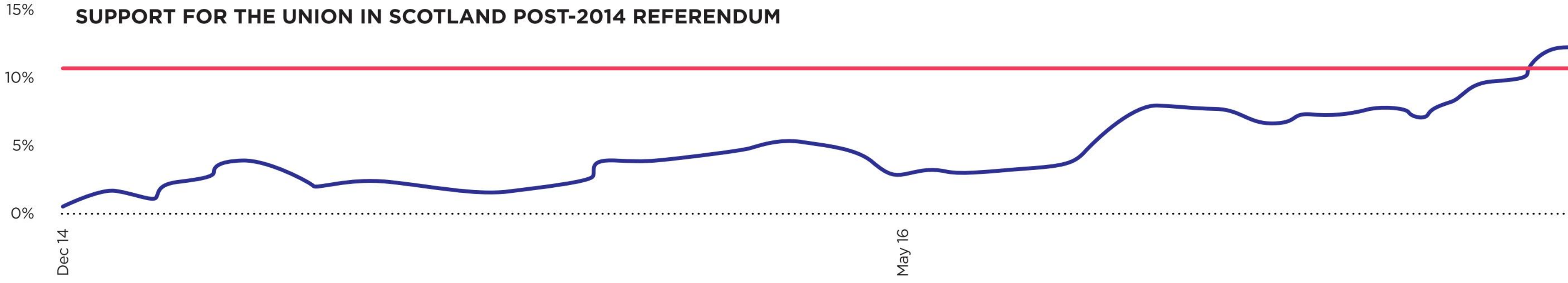
To many in Scotland the Brexit vote and its aftermath has been like watching a slow-motion train crash occurring in another country rather than their own.

The endless obsession of the London media with the minutiae of Brexit has seemed quite alien to a nation already beset with its own, different constitutional debate.

The Scottish referendum debate of 2014 certainly had its echoes in Brexit. The sight and sound of rival demonstrators trying to disrupt news bulletins, the vacuous rhetoric of "taking back control" and vainglorious declarations of "independence day" have heightened many Scots' sense of just how different the various nations and regions of the United Kingdom have become.

Indeed, all across the UK, questions of national identity are being increasingly asked, as people assess whether they consider themselves British, English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish or, perhaps, European. Such questions predate the referendum, but Brexit has certainly had a catalysing effect.

The very idea of Britain, and what it stands for, is now up for debate. As Diarmaid MacCulloch, the English historian and academic, asked at a event this week, what is the purpose of Britishness, now that Protestantism and empire have gone? The man on the street might not put it the same way, but the



SUPPORT FOR THE UNION IN SCOTLAND POST-2014 REFERENDUM

READY TO GO: 80,000 pro-independence demonstrators march in Glasgow after the UK General Election

Photo: Getty Images

same questions are now being asked all over Britain. Debates that might once have seemed niche and academic are now mainstream. So where will the politics lead?

It is simple to conclude – on either side of the border – that the diverging paths taken by Scotland and England can lead only to divorce. To many, the only questions might be how and when it will take place.

But this is no black and white fissure. The rhetoric between Edinburgh and London may have ramped up a little – one side drumming its fingers while the other rules out even the remotest chance of a sit-down chat. This relationship carries many more shades of grey. The assumption that all this spells Scottish independence is too glib and quite lazy. Separation is not inevitable, although neither is reconciliation.

North of the border, the woman at the crux of the question is first minister Nicola Sturgeon. An unrepentant Remainer, she has been consistent in her critique of Brexit, and particularly her hostility towards Johnson's style of politics. Sturgeon's party has been in power at Holyrood since 2007 and is favourite to remain the biggest party at the Scottish parliament after its next elections in May 2021.

The early stages of the Johnson government have not indicated any thawing of relations between nationalist Holyrood and Tory Westminster. Sturgeon's demand for a new referendum on Scottish independence to be held this year has been rejected flatly by Downing Street, whose permission is required for such a poll to go ahead.

The Tories say the SNP asserted that the 2014 poll was a "once in a generation" vote. Nationalists argue that Brexit has changed all that, as it represents a material change: the 'no' side had promised that a vote against separation would guarantee Scotland could stay within the European Union, a prospect destroyed two years later.

It is difficult to find anyone but a zealot who might believe a fresh 'IndyRef 2' vote will take place during 2020. Sturgeon has insisted "anything is possible", but appears to have shifted emphasis towards using the 2021 election to test public opinion. "I never thought there was any purpose to an independence referendum. I thought any talk of it was dangerous for the SNP," says long-standing observer James Mitchell, professor of public policy at Edinburgh University.

He points out that the independence case initially led the SNP's December election campaign, but failed to capture the imagination of an electorate whose attention was taken up more with Brexit. "They switched to the Remain argument towards the end of the campaign and the result was a good result because of that switch. It was the Conservative Party that talked the most about independence in the end."

And talk about it they continue to do. Scottish Tories have spent several years – and several election campaigns – loudly accusing the SNP government of being "obsessed" with independence, rather than "concentrating on the day job": running Scottish education and health. This cacophony was raised initially by Ruth Davidson and is being echoed by the man elected last weekend to replace her as leader of the Scottish Conservatives, Jackson Carlaw.

Mitchell believes that noisy campaign has been unsuccessful, despite the profile earned by Davidson during her eight years as Scottish party leader. Latterly the line of attack appeared less credible as Davidson – a Remainer who famously attacked Johnson at a public debate at Wembley Arena in 2016 – found it increasingly difficult to defend Tory policies in Scotland.

"The Conservatives have managed to tap into the 'unionist' vote in Scotland, especially while the Labour vote has shrunk. But have they managed to convert any of that into support for Tory policies? That has been Ruth Davidson's failure – they needed people to support their policies rather than defining themselves against the SNP," points out Mitchell.

There is every chance that the Conservatives will be the second party in the Scottish parliament next year. But they could still be as many as 20 points behind the SNP. And even in a sensationally good poll, Carlaw would have to form a coalition with other parties – Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green – to form a government. Certainly Labour and Greens would reject that option, leaving the SNP with a minority administration at worst.

Meanwhile, Downing Street's attitude towards Scotland varies widely. A few weeks ago, the newspaper lobby was briefed that Johnson planned to "love-bomb" Scotland, visiting the country more often, perhaps even taking over some major infrastructure spending, and banging the drum for his government's role in backing various projects north of the border.

Simultaneously, the relationship witnesses numerous petty rifts. Johnson wants it to be underlined that the UK government, and not Holyrood, will be responsible for the COP26 United Nations conference on climate change which will welcome heads of state to Glasgow in November. There have even been hints that the conference might be switched "to an English city" if the estimated policing bill is not reduced. There have been similar tensions, played out in the newspapers, over two drugs conferences – seemingly identical but organised by each administration – scheduled later this month at the same venue on different days.

Such skirmishes have their parallel in Ireland. The fate of erstwhile premier Leo Varadkar during recent elections betrayed a naive view of Irish politics by gleeful pro-Brexit Tories, who had come to see him as an obstacle rather than the leader of a smaller neighbour enjoying the backing of the EU during its post-Brexit trade negotiations.

Yet the elevation of Sinn Féin to an unprecedented position within Ireland arguably presents a far greater threat to British interests – or at least unionist ones – on the island. Sinn Féin may not form a

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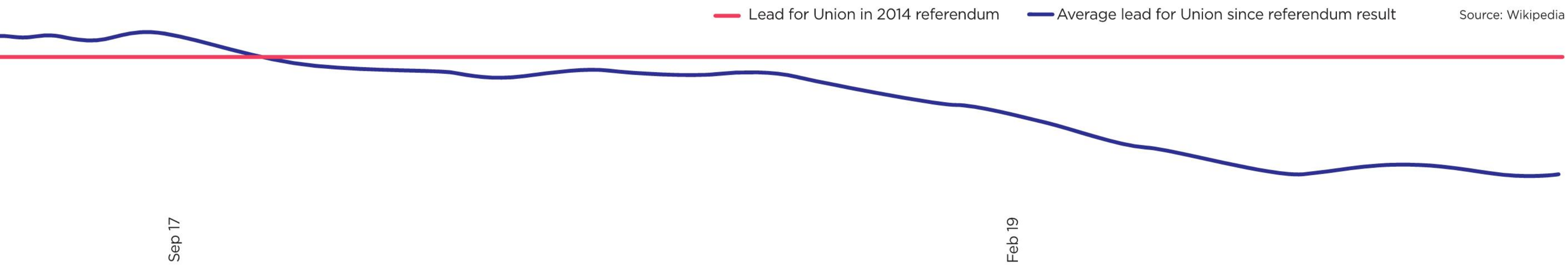

Source: Wikipedia

AGENDA

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minority government in Dublin – its rivals remain determined to prevent that – but the fact that it might even be contemplating power should be enough to remind Downing Street that the break-up of Britain remains a real potential consequence of Brexit.

Sinn Féin unequivocally seeks a united Ireland; more so than any other political party. While the Republic may have a majority in favour, support is much less full-blooded than in the past. In the north, the Catholic nationalist community might soon out-number others, but support for unification is by no means a certainty.

Life has moved on since the partition of Ireland, whose centenary will take place next year. Then, the compromise was to separate north and south, initially to facilitate Irish home rule. The predominantly Protestant population of six counties within Ulster preferred to stay British. Today, with the Catholic church less influential in the south, the sectarian lines are a little less distinct. There is anecdotal evidence too that some northern Catholics are less keen on unification, and also that the idea seems less attractive to Dublin, where the north is seen as a major potential economic burden.

A poll for the *Belfast Telegraph* this week underlined just how unpredictable politics can be, and how voters can sometimes confound received wisdom. The study of 2,000 people in Northern Ireland found support for a united Ireland at just 29%, with 52% backing remaining in the UK. The rest were undecided, or declined to answer.

Just months ago, Julian Smith was sent to Belfast as the new secretary of state, his brief to break the impasse that had seen Stormont closed for three years in the wake of a bust-up between Sinn Féin and the DUP. Smith is recognised generally as having charmed the various parties into finally agreeing a settlement that saw the resumption of a power-sharing assembly. His reward last week was to be fired by Johnson, apparently for rousing the sensibilities of the Tory right over whether military transgressions in Northern Ireland might be subjected to the law.

Smith was the Tories' fourth Northern Ireland secretary since the Brexit vote in June 2016. His replacement, Brandon Lewis, is the sixth since the Tory-led coalition took power less than a decade ago. The sense of indifference is palpable to many in Belfast and elsewhere: do the Tories care about Ireland, north or south, beyond Brexit?

The political website *Slugger O'Toole* has rated Smith as fourth in a league table comprising the last 21 secretaries of state; quite an achievement considering his mere six months in the job. His contribution towards reinstating Stormont won him a place just behind Mo Mowlam, Willie Whitelaw and Sir Patrick Mayhew – venerable company in the pantheon of what has been an often-thankless posting.

But where does this all leave the much vaunted break-up of Britain?

If Downing Street's response to Sturgeon's referendum plea is to be a mix of hostility and indifference, will Scots – or at least those who support independence – rise up against London rule? Right now, public opinion seems evenly divided, with opinion polls recording roughly 50:50 for and against, after the removal of a substantial number saying they "don't know". Is that enough to trigger an SNP campaign? Some activists want Sturgeon to wait, presumably so that the negative effects of Brexit kick in and boost support for independence towards 60%, perhaps higher.

That calculation assumes that a largely pro-Remain electorate will turn towards a second breakaway – Scotland from the UK – in response to Brexit. There is a counter-argument that voters who didn't want change in the form of Brexit, are unlikely to respond by voting for a step beyond in the form of Scottish independence. "It could go either way. There is a sizeable body of opinion that is not strongly committed one way or another," believes professor Mitchell.

"People are saying 'not yet' and 'not now'. Even if the SNP had a very explicit reference to a referendum in their manifesto, it doesn't mean that there would be one now."

So if current circumstances are not enough to convince people to back its single unique policy, why is the SNP still most likely to be the biggest party, poised to win its fourth successive Holyrood election in 2021? "The main reason they continue to do well is partly the same as 2007 and 2011," believes Mitchell. "The public likes the SNP because they are seen as caring for Scotland. And there is a sense of competence about their management of government."

He points out: "In policy terms we have a very timid first minister. They are not doing anything radical in government. Instead they are all about management. They run scared of taking any changes in the short term, for example with the NHS in Scotland, which desperately needs reform." And in politics, of course, some things are easier to manage than others. Next month the trial of Sturgeon's predecessor, Alex Salmond, on sexual assault charges, begins in Edinburgh. No-one has yet dared predict its impact might have on the fortunes of the SNP, whatever the outcome.

In Northern Ireland, first minister Arlene Foster may be feeling similarly timid, for different reasons. She awaits the outcome of the public inquiry in the so-called "cash for ash" scandal, which is not expected to show her or the DUP in a good light. Her party was enthusiastically pro-Brexit even though the Northern Ireland electorate was not. The subsequent wrangling over soft or hard borders, and the potential for a customs line to be drawn in the Irish Sea is damaging to a party whose raison d'etre is the survival of the Union.

The rise of Sinn Féin on both sides of the border carries risks for the DUP too, with the increased threat of a Border poll – something Brandon Lewis would be obliged to consider, under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, if and when he and his advisers came to believe there might be a majority supporting unification.

"Is that more likely than it was?" asks John Garry, professor of political behaviour at Queen's University Belfast. "It is certainly more salient as an issue. Julian Smith managed to keep everyone pleased; there was something approaching consensus, so his departure so soon has been disappointing.

"People may interpret that to mean loyalty to the prime minister is more important than achieving something here. It is rare that the various actors are agreed about that."

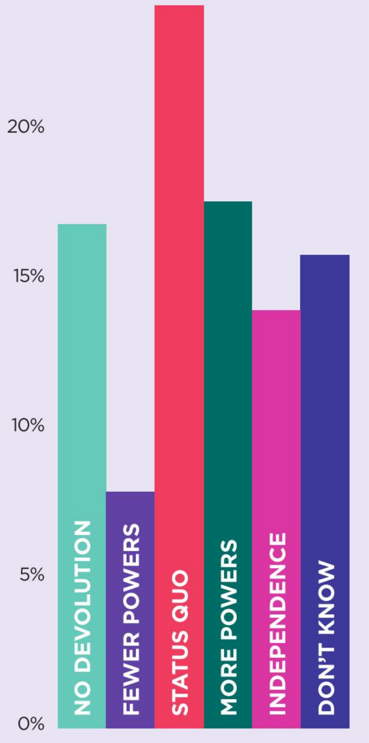
Even in Leave-voting Wales, the situation is being watched closely, and not only by Plaid Cymru. The Welsh position since devolution has always been about edging towards greater autonomy, especially each time there has been some advance in Scotland. Since 2014, Welsh politicians have been wary of slipping behind in terms of devolved powers. As the debate pushes in very different directions regarding Scotland and Ireland, many Welsh politicians – even those who are against a full break from Westminster, do not want to be left too far behind. Indeed, anyone looking for evidence that similar centrifugal forces are at work in Wales, as elsewhere, need look no further than a YouGov poll from earlier this month, which suggested that support for Welsh independence had risen by 5% since the general election, now standing at 27%. Of all options, including more or fewer powers for the Welsh Assembly, however, the status quo was the most popular.

During the Scottish referendum campaign of 2014, a majority of English

HOT AND COLD: Despite his professed love for the UK, Boris Johnson's policies may be putting its future at risk
Photo: Getty Images

OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF WALES

YouGov poll on Welsh voting preferences



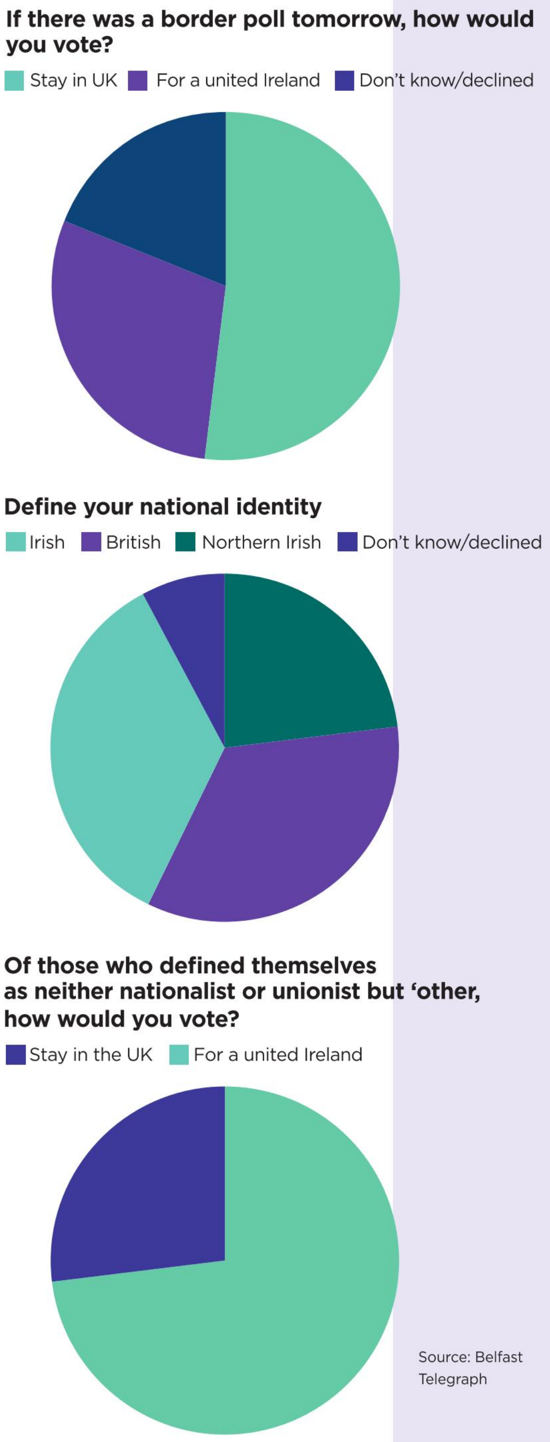
people appeared to back the continuation of the UK in its current form. But there is some evidence of attitudes hardening since the Brexit vote two years later. The annual 'Future of England' survey found in 2018 that most Conservative supporters would accept Scottish independence (79%) or the collapse of the Northern Irish peace process (75%) as the price of achieving Brexit. For them, leaving the EU was more important than saving what Theresa May had described at the time as "our precious Union".

For all these reasons and more, the break-up of Britain is certainly closer than it has been for generations, but a lot must happen before Scotland departs or Ireland re-unites.

Traditionally the Conservatives have been firmly in favour of no change on these matters, and certainly the party north of the border remains resolutely against any. But attitudes do shift – the Tories were against devolution happening under the Blair government in the late 1990s, yet ironically the proportional representation system which was introduced saved the party in Scotland, where it had been left with no Westminster seats in 1997.

But Boris Johnson blows hot and cold on the Union. When he is not promising to "love bomb" his Scottish neighbours, he is threatening to trample all over devolved government, with rumours of reining in Holyrood's powers, or reputedly nicknaming Sturgeon as "Jimmy Krankie". An uneasy relationship could be getting much worse. His warm words about Northern Ireland are undermined by his actions, from a Unionist point of view, when it actually comes to negotiations about a customs border in the Irish Sea. He no long needs the DUP to bolster his party in the Commons, as did his lame duck predecessor Theresa May. The question is whether, in the long run, his party in England may be quite prepared to let Scotland and Northern Ireland go in pursuit of a 'perfect Brexit'.

SUPPORT FOR THE UNION IN NORTHERN IRELAND



Source: Belfast Telegraph

The new player in the Brexit process

MARY C. MURPHY assesses the likely impact on Brexit of Sinn Féin's election success

Political hostility, historical antipathy and considerable incompatibility on both policies and principles has traditionally sullied the relationships between Sinn Féin and Ireland's two other largest parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. But while they are reluctant to share power with Sinn Féin, the current political arithmetic of the new parliament suggests the next Irish government will require its participation.

So what does this mean for Ireland's relationship with the EU, and its upcoming post-Brexit trade negotiations with the UK? Decidedly to the left of the political spectrum, Sinn Féin's position on the EU has shifted over time. In its early days, the party was ardently anti-EU. For reasons of both national sovereignty and anti-capitalism, it stridently opposed Irish membership of the EU in 1973. In the intervening years, the benefits of EU membership were not lost on Sinn Féin. The single market, access to the Common Agricultural Policy, structural fund assistance and EU support for the Northern Ireland peace process led to some moderation of the party's original objections. Ongoing opposition to closer and deeper EU integration was nonetheless evident. The party campaigned against various EU treaty reforms, including Maastricht, Nice and Lisbon.

Sinn Féin's decision to support and campaign for Remain during the 2016 referendum might appear out of sync with its soft euroscepticism, however, this position was largely motivated by homegrown political and constitutional concerns. Sinn Féin was concerned that Brexit could undermine north-south relations on the island of Ireland – a particularly important outcome of the peace process for Irish nationalists. There were also concerns it would re-policitise the Irish border and destabilise politics and community relations in Northern Ireland.

Motivated by Northern Ireland's 56% Remain vote, the party argued vociferously against any Brexit deal which threatened to re-impose a border between Northern Ireland and the Republic. The Sinn Féin position was backed by a strongly-supportive EU and its chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, consistently maintained that: "Ireland's interest is the EU's interest".

In the Republic, a striking level of cross-party consensus has defined Ireland's approach to Brexit. All Irish political parties, including Sinn Féin, supported the approach to Brexit taken by Fine Gael-led governments. Testament to this is the fact that Brexit simply did not feature as an issue during the election. An exit poll suggested that just 1% of Irish voters were concerned about Brexit.

The withdrawal agreement meets Sinn Féin's central Brexit objective to maintain an open border on the island of Ireland, albeit using a complex formula where Northern Ireland is effectively part of the EU for the purposes of customs and free movement of goods.

From an Irish perspective, there are two dimensions to the next stage of the process: first, to ensure that the withdrawal agreement's provisions on Northern Ireland are implemented, and second, to negotiate a future UK-EU relationship that does the least damage. A Sinn Féin coalition government will maintain an emphasis on protecting Irish interests, but there may be some subtle shifts in priorities, focus and relationships.

Sinn Féin's core political aim is Irish unity. Although the issue of unification was not part of the national conversation during the recent campaign, the party's president, Mary Lou McDonald, highlighted her intention to pursue such an agenda on the back of the party's extraordinary election performance.

She is seeking European support and explicitly suggested in an interview that: "The EU needs to take a stand in respect of Ireland in the same way that it supported the reunification of Germany." This position has the potential to complicate and frustrate Ireland's EU partners who will not welcome being dragged into what are domestic political and constitutional matters for Ireland and the UK.

Sinn Féin's position will also antagonise the British government and may taint the UK-EU negotiating atmosphere. Any further hardening of the British intention to diverge from EU rules would complicate the implementation of the new arrangements for Northern Ireland and its border with the Republic.

But the extent of Sinn Féin's influence in any future government should not be overstated. The party is unlikely to be the largest partner in any coalition so its rhetoric and positions on a whole raft of policies will necessarily have to moderate. It's also doubtful that it would hold all (if any) of the key Brexit-related ministries such as foreign affairs, finance or European affairs.

The backbone of Ireland's Brexit effort – the Irish civil service – will continue to direct and manage Ireland's approach to the EU. And a strongly pro-EU Irish public will not want to see the Ireland-EU relationship jeopardised. The 2020 general election in Ireland has interrupted the country's political equilibrium. New political forces, agendas and voices are now set to be part of the next Irish government. This will require some adjustment and perhaps a degree of reorientation, but political, institutional and other factors will ensure that key features and characteristics of the Ireland-EU relationship endure.

■ Mary C. Murphy is Jean Monnet chair in European integration and lecturer at University College Cork; this article also appears at theconversation.com

‘Socialist’ Sanders gives Trump a schtick to beat him with

Bernie
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SCARY PROSPECT FOR MANY: Democratic presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders at a primary event in New Hampshire
Photo: Getty Images

Some of my family back in the States have been emailing me the one question that I imagine much of America is asking: “What’s the difference between a socialist and a democratic socialist?”

I answered that a democratic socialist accepts the million dollar royalties from a book sale. A socialist does not.

Or that a democratic socialist registers for high public office under two different parties. A socialist does not.

A democratic socialist asks for small donor contributions, many people contributing as a standing order every month from their credit card. I know someone who does this and says that she is not alone. It makes the credit card companies big supporters of democratic socialism.

No, I am not a fan of the independent senator from Vermont, now re-registered as a Democrat so that he can run, once again for president. I know teenagers who have been Democrats longer than Bernie Sanders has.

In a real sense, none of this matters. What matters to the majority of Dems, and to some Republican suburban voters who keep the president’s approval numbers below 50%, is that Donald J. Trump is not returned to the Oval Office.

If senator Sanders is the Democratic Party nominee, then all Dems should rally behind him and his running mate. I certainly will. Just about everyone will put rancour behind them (unlike many of Sanders’ supporters in 2016 who detested the fact that Hillary became the party’s nominee) and fight for Bernie. (By the way, Hillary should, too. Her sniping about him is 100% beneath her.) We will all support him. Because Donald J. Trump of Queens, New York, must be defeated.

The fact is that ‘socialism’ is a bad word in the US. Maybe the worst word that can be uttered in politics.

Many Americans have no idea exactly what it is, but think it must have to do with Russia.

‘Russia’, for many, means the Soviet Union, even though the Soviet Union is gone. The Soviet Union means the Cold War, atom bombs, spies and the space race, and so forth. So, since the word ‘socialist’ is in the proper title of the old Soviet Union, then socialism is an evil thing.

As an American you grow up believing and knowing that socialism is bad – which is why the so-called Democrat Party ‘establishment’ is scared to death of Bernie Sanders heading the ticket this autumn.

The main reason is that the ‘s’ word could kill what’s known as ‘down ticket’ – these are the candidates who are running state-wide and locally.

Imagine a woman in South Carolina running on the platform of the Dems with a Vermont ‘socialist’ as head of the ticket. Just imagine.

Although Bernie came out well in the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries (second and first, respectively) – early indicators of the will of the Democrat voter – the party could be annihilated in the general. Wiped out.

I’m from a neighbouring state to Iowa, Illinois, aka the Solid Midwest. I call this region the ‘Trump Archipelago’ because the president mainly visits and campaigns in this region. He won the Upper Midwest by a sliver of votes. But because the electoral college is ‘winner takes all’ he got elected.

Unless I have been away from my native region too long, I cannot imagine the steelworkers of Detroit electing a ‘democratic socialist’ to the White House. Many in the party are scared to death that the Dems will face the same result that the Labour Party did this past December. No one knows.

The majority of people in Iowa and New Hampshire, big Bernie states, identify as white. Only a little over half of Americans do. And the New Hampshire folks are relatively affluent compared to many states. Most Americans are not.

A journalist was asked, after their primary was over recently, about New Hampshire voters, who turned out early: just how did they get there?

“In their four-wheel drives” was the reply.

Of course we all know that the 2016 Bernie for President campaign never died. Like his nemesis Trump, Sanders has been campaigning for four years. Campaigning as the ‘outrider’, the guy from the ‘outside’. Just like Trump.

The Don called him “crazy Bernie” in 2016. He pointed out, every chance that he had, that Sanders was being done down by Evil Hillary.

Some of the ‘Bernie Bros’ I know heard that dogwhistle and voted for Trump. But Trump has no fear of Sanders.

His fear of Joe Biden ended up with Trump being the third president to be impeached and the first to have a bipartisan vote in the senate against him on one Article of Impeachment. History will not see this condemnation as water under the bridge, as his supporters believe.

“Impeached” will be pretty close to his rank in the list of Presidents. That’s how history rolls and you can count on it.

Trump weaponises the dreaded ‘s’ word for all to fear. And that might create that Holy Grail for Republicans: a brokered Democratic Party National Convention, when it is held in Milwaukee in July.

A brokered convention is one in which the delegates are unable to agree on a nominee during the first round of voting. Then horse-trading starts; old score settling is displayed etc. This, of course, would be a disaster for the Dems and it would be played out in prime time. With Bernie, it might happen.

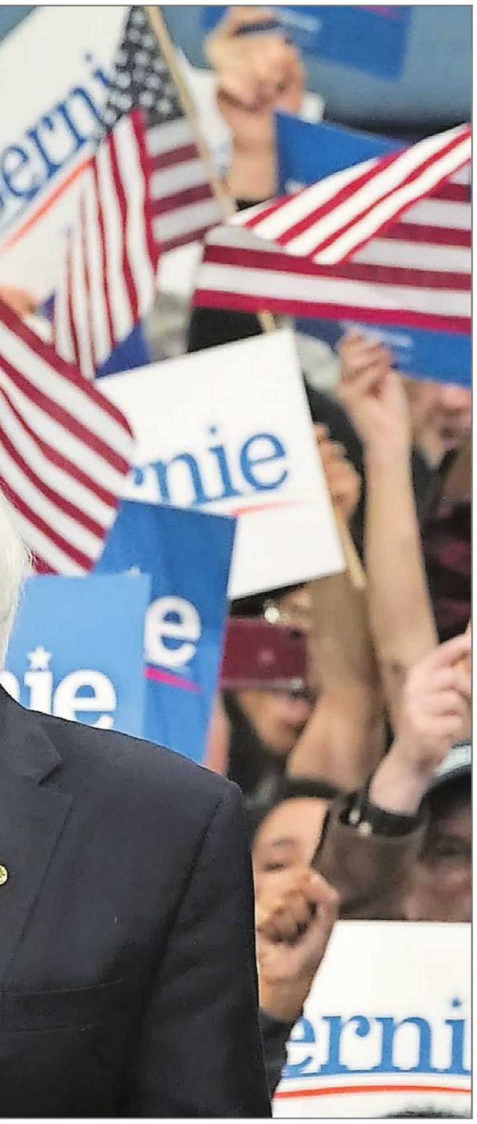
Things will become clearer after ‘Super Tuesday’, on March 3, when 14 states – including the two most populous, California and Texas – will hold their primaries. In total, 1,357 of the 3,979 ‘pledged’ delegates to the convention will be allocated to candidates that day. These ‘pledged’ delegates are those chosen at state or local level with the understanding that they will support a particular candidate at the convention.

Separately, there are also 771 automatic delegates, or ‘superdelegates’, who are not required to indicate preference for a candidate. This category was created in the 1960s so that African Americans could vote at the national convention, by-passing their segregated Southern state conventions.

To win the Democratic Party presidential nomination, a candidate must have 1,990 delegates on the first ballot. If not, the horse-trading or brokering begins. Super Tuesday will give a clue as to whether that is where are heading.

Before then, though, we will have other votes. Nevada’s caucus is this weekend. The state’s powerful Culinary Workers Union has decided not to endorse a candidate, the same action they took in 2016 amidst the Bernie and Hillary fight in the party. This is a huge blow to Joe Biden. And a rebuke to Sanders.

The union criticises Medicare For All because it would take away their existing health coverage. That seems pretty obvious. The union has a large Latino



membership, working in restaurants and hospitality.

Nevada is the early-voting state with the largest Latino population at 29%.

The Culinary Workers Union leaflet criticising Medicare For All outraged Sanders' supporters and progressive groups. The union itself likes the candidate.

The Democratic Party's Hispanic Caucus called the dispute an "unforced error". Sanders has momentum going into Nevada, so things may change. But those railing against the Democratic Party 'establishment' once again may ask themselves why these people are the establishment. Maybe because the people back them.

Which goes back to the first dilemma: why is Sanders calling himself a socialist. Because he isn't. He likes Scandinavia. They aren't socialists.

Maybe he calls himself a socialist because it's a kind of shorthand. Or maybe it's personal branding.

Maybe because it pisses people off. I don't know.

Of course, if Sanders gets the nod at the convention in Milwaukee, all Democrats and those of us who vote Dem should enthusiastically get behind him.

But with his socialist shtick, Sanders is handing Trump such a gift.

Makes you wonder why political parties and their activists don't listen to the people who vote for them.

Why grassroots members shouldn't choose party leaders

As Labour members prepare to cast their votes for their chosen candidates, MEG RUSSELL explains why the process is so flawed and damaging

This Friday, the ballot opens in the Labour leadership election. It will close again on April 2, with the result announced two days later. The three candidates still in the running – Rebecca Long-Bailey, Lisa Nandy and Sir Keir Starmer all got through an initial round of nominations by Labour MPs (and MEPs) and a second round (which eliminated the fourth candidate, Emily Thornberry), of support from constituency parties and affiliate organisations.

Under the system, the party's MPs have relatively little control over the outcome, serving only to narrow the field before members make the final choice. A leader could therefore emerge who has little support from parliament – as happened in 2015, when Jeremy Corbyn was elected. This arrangement departs significantly from the original basis for choosing UK party leaders and has potentially destabilising effects on the whole political system, given parliament's centrality.

Traditionally, MPs chose party leaders. Labour was the first party to diverge from this. Under pressure from left-wing activists, who believed MPs were prone to picking overly centrist leaders, Labour agreed to give greater say to local parties and trade unions. It adopted the so-called 'electoral college' in 1981, giving equal weight in the final outcome to three groups – MPs, constituency parties and affiliated organisations. MPs continued to control the initial nominations.

This system survived largely intact for decades without upset. The final ballot outcome was consistent with MPs' own preferences for the elections of Neil Kinnock in 1983, John Smith in 1992 and Tony Blair in 1994 (while Gordon Brown's 2007 succession was uncontested).

Cracks began showing in 2010, when Ed Miliband was elected despite his brother David having greater support from both MPs and party members. To avoid future splits in the electoral college, Ed Miliband abolished it. He gave the final say to members, registered supporters and affiliated members, who all participate on an equal basis. This system elected Corbyn and is being repeated (with minor modifications) now.

The Conservative Party changed its rules more slowly and retained more safeguards. Famously, Conservatives used to pick their leader through a system of informal 'soundings' in the parliamentary party. Formal elections, which were still among MPs only, weren't introduced until 1965.

William Hague brought in a new system in 1997. This echoed Labour's by including the wider membership, but it retained stronger parliamentary party control. MPs vote in a series of ballots (if necessary) to choose two candidates. Members then vote on these finalists. But in 2003 and 2016 the parliamentary party agreed on a single candidate (Michael Howard and Theresa May, respectively) without a member ballot.

The emphasis on members in these elections has weakened traditional lines of accountability. Although MPs (very narrowly) put Corbyn on the ballot in 2015, for example, it was always clear that only a minority supported him. In 2016 he suffered a vote of no-confidence among his MPs when 172 (81%) voted against him and only 40 in favour. Despite this he won a fresh leadership contest among members, leaving Labour MPs with a leader they plainly did not support.

This situation is constitutionally problematic. The UK is a parliamentary democracy, meaning that the government (and by association its leader) must retain the confidence of the House of Commons to remain in office. A UK party leader is chosen as a potential prime minister, but can only govern successfully if they have parliament's support.

A leader lacking their own party's confidence is simply not credible as prime minister – a fundamental point recently recognised by former Labour deputy leader Tom Watson, who commented: "As soon as the leader loses the confidence of the parliamentary party it's almost impossible to see how you can form a government."

Iain Duncan Smith's election as Conservative leader in 2001 has some echoes of the Corbyn case. Michael Portillo, the original frontrunner among MPs, was knocked out through strategic (and perhaps partly miscalculated) voting. One participant suggested that some MPs "were making a statement by voting for Duncan Smith but didn't really expect him to become leader as a result".

An analysis of his leadership later suggested that his legitimacy was significantly undermined by a lack of endorsement from the parliamentary party. Duncan Smith was ultimately ousted before he could face the electorate, leading to Howard's uncontested elevation to leader in 2003.

If membership ballots undermine parliamentary accountability, weaken parliamentary parties and cast leaders' legitimacy into doubt, what can be done, and most pressingly, what can be done in the Labour contest currently under way?

Long term, a thorough review of leadership rules seems warranted. This includes thinking about how many MP nominations a candidate should need to get on the ballot and whether people should be allowed to register with the party just to cast a vote in the leadership election. More than 100,000 people have joined Labour since December – which at one level seems healthy, but also raises concerns about infiltration (which clearly occurred to some extent in 2015).

A compromise would be for Labour to adopt something closer to the Conservative rules, giving a larger role to the parliamentary party. But the Duncan Smith case shows that these have problems too.

A more radical approach would be to accept the logic of a parliamentary system, and return the choice of parliamentary leader to MPs. They, after all, know the candidates best, and can also decide quickly – as the Conservatives did in 2003 and 2016.

Shorter term, if Labour's new leader is to succeed, it seems essential that they have the confidence of the parliamentary party. Emily Thornberry (who received the smallest number of MP nominations before her elimination) had pledged to step aside if she lacked that confidence. As a minimum, other candidates should promise the same. The Conservative Party rules already prevent a leader who has lost the parliamentary party's confidence from standing again. Such a rule seems a minimum requirement to ensure the integrity of the system.

■ Meg Russell is professor of British and comparative politics and director of the Constitution Unit, UCL; this article also appears at theconversation.com

WRONG CHOICE FOR LEADER: Iain Duncan Smith and his wife Betsy Photo: Getty Images

A rising tide of troubles

MICHAEL WHITE ON THE WEEK JOHNSON SURROUNDED HIMSELF WITH A CABINET OF VASSALS

Chinese emperors past and present have traditionally been judged by their people on the speed and efficiency of the regime's response to the great natural disasters, earthquake and flood, pestilence and famine, which have always beset the world's oldest surviving autocracy. We can see the process today in the ways Beijing is responding to environmental pollution and the coronavirus outbreak. It imposes drastic restrictions on its citizens, blames local officials for failings which may really be its own fault and uses the crisis to settle political scores. Fingers crossed, eh Comrade Xi.

So I have been watching with interest how our own self-styled World King is using what the Chinese would call The Mandate of Heaven conferred by voters in the December election result. Easily granted, easily taken away. A neglected flood here, a coronavirus outbreak mishandled there, a severe touch of frost that disrupts our comfortable lives (a tough speech by David Frost, the UK's latest Brexit trade negotiator in this case), suddenly the volatile public mood may change. You'll know when the tabloids rush to reallocate blame.

Safe in their flood-free homes, many members of the chattering class have spent the last week watching with horror or delight the intrigues among the World King's courtiers. They have seen an apparently secure chancellor, Sajid Javid, capriciously struck down, replaced by a novice, albeit a smart one, as part of a wider strategy to subdue all opposition, including the cabinet of vassals. Andrew Sabisky, a previously obscure "misfit and weirdo" with a portfolio of obnoxious views, is caught in the crossfire and forced out of No.10 as other designated vassals, MPs and media, hit back.

* * *

Chances are that more voter attention has been consumed by the suicide of *Love Island* star Caroline Flack or the brutal self-harm done to Manchester City by its moneymen than by young Andrew. The oligarchs may own the club, but not the regulators at Uefa who have subjected it to a footballing Mexit from the European club competitions. In the pubs of Manchester, City supporters seem to blame Uefa – "they're picking on us" – not the club's owners. It is a very Leave response, but talented foreign players may leave too rather than spend two years outside Europe.

But such dramas don't impinge directly on most people's lives in the way that three feet of sewage water in the living room does, or the anxious trip to the GP with a high temperature. So voters' interest in King Boris is not focused on the finer points of Frost's Canada-plus negotiating stance. It will be judging how well the WK handles the floods on so many of Britain's rivers and the rigour with which his ministers and officials prepare to combat the risk of a coronavirus pandemic here.

So far, so not-so-good. George Eustice, the new environment secretary, has been wading through muddy water in wellies – as a Cornish fruit farmer by trade he has his own pair – while the PM was "kept informed". Not good enough? "Where's Boris?' the tabloids have been asking. Skulking at Chevening, the vassal foreign secretary's grace and favour pad (Chequers has the builders in), that's where. Hmmm. Didn't he have a mysterious freebie holiday in Mustique only last month?

As for the government's lack of solicitous care towards Brits quarantined on the *Diamond Princess* cruise liner and in Wuhan, the stranded Brits have plenty of spare time and the iPhones to pipe their distress and disappointment straight into voters' homes, courtesy of the hated news bulletins. "Can't we stop this, Dom," you can imagine the WK asking his Grand Vizier. "I'm working on the licence fee, but reading Sabisky's weirdo contributions to my blog has taken all morning," comes the reply. "No, I meant getting the Brits home." "Losers."

Apart from Frost's talks and the flood damage, possibly that pandemic too, all this is transient trivia, especially self-important Mr Sabisky. But first impressions matter. Gordon Brown won a brief respite with his robust response to floods and a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in mid-2007. Theresa May reinforced an image of insensitive incompetence by her non-response to the Grenfell fire soon after her 2017 election mishap. Flood risk is complex, but floods reinforce the north-south, rural-urban narrative of relative neglect.

Boris's sluggish reflexes suggest Heaven's Mandate is already a little tarnished. And so it should be. It is a guiding principle of this column that the World King's behaviour is not all and always wrong. Nor are all the instincts and actions of his prime minister, Dominic Cummings. A newly-mandated government must seize the honeymoon moment to take hold of the agenda and shake up institutions before the forces of resistance and inertia wear them down. Successive leaders like Thatcher and Blair did that. Shrinking the cabinet from 31 to a mere 26 is sensible too.

But after 70 days, Boris Johnson's second administration fails to convey any clear strategic sense or grip. Having expelled or sacked experienced ministers last year he now sacks a clutch more while bringing back victims of his earlier levity like Penny Mordaunt in a lesser role. She used last summer's sacking to display backbench fealty rather than the intelligent independence I'd hoped to see. That is very much the Johnson way of doing business, the Trump and Erdogan way of doing it too.

> **"Where's Boris?' the tabloids have been asking. Skulking at Chevening, the vassal foreign secretary's grace and favour pad (Chequers has the builders in), that's where. Hmmm. Didn't he have a mysterious freebie holiday in Mustique only last month?**

It works if it succeeds or, more likely, if it cows independent institutions as a precaution... cabinet, Whitehall ministries, the BBC and lobby journalists, parliament and the courts, the CBI, the list gets longer.

* * *

So does the enemies list. As Phil Collins, ex-Blair speechwriter, now a *Times* columnist, explained last week Johnson's reshuffle has displayed power, not purpose or a plan. The manner of it was an assault on his own party and reflects the World King's ruthlessness – the vital quality which his gentler biographer, Andrew Gimson, admires – and his willingness to let brutal Cummings off the leash.

So it was surely significant that when he reportedly humiliated special advisers in a private session the other day, before he sacked or reshuffled them, it was another spad who previously worked at the *Sun* who stood up to him on their behalf. Little wonder that the toady press has not been sounding quite so toady. The pundits have rehearsed historic tensions between No.10 and No.11, rival power centres which corridors link in strange intimacy. They remind readers that many prime ministers have tried and mostly failed to assert politics over economics, or to get the Treasury's skinflint hands off brilliant spending wheezes (as the People's Dom would put it). They point out that the Treasury has thousands of staff, No.10 barely 100.

But the Stephen Glovers (*Daily Mail*), Iain Martins (*Times*) and Charles Moores (*Telegraph*), all pro-Brexit and pro-Boris, all end up by agreeing that, if a good working relationship is important, the Treasury's independence is important too: if Javid could not appoint his own spads, he was right to resign. That was my initial reaction too. Then I wondered if a more experienced and weightier operator – the kind that used to sit in cabinets – might better have said "yes" to Boris, then used the breathing space to organise cabinet resistance to No.10's power grab. But in a cabinet of vassals who dares resist? Not Grant Shapps, methinks. Not Matt Hancock.

Times man Collins wrote with force that if Rishi Sunak ("Baby CHINO" to the wags) has it in him to become a substantial political heavyweight – there is no telling at this stage, he is just a bright and nimble meritocrat doing Cummings' bidding – he has immense potential power over No.10 because Johnson can't afford to lose another chancellor. Bide your time, then pick a fight with Cummings and demand his dismissal, Collins suggested.

Precisely. We know it's right because it's what happened last time the "career psychopath" (copyright D Cameron) was unleashed against Whitehall on behalf of Michael "Trust Me" Gove. He picked one too many fights and was sacked, much the same as Blair insisted that Brown sack his turbulent press man, Charlie Whelan, blamed (wrongly) for dobbing in Peter Mandelson over his mortgage in 1998. Come to think of it, in the last dispute Cummings was fighting for decentralised power – education to be run by him and Gove, not No.10. How times change!

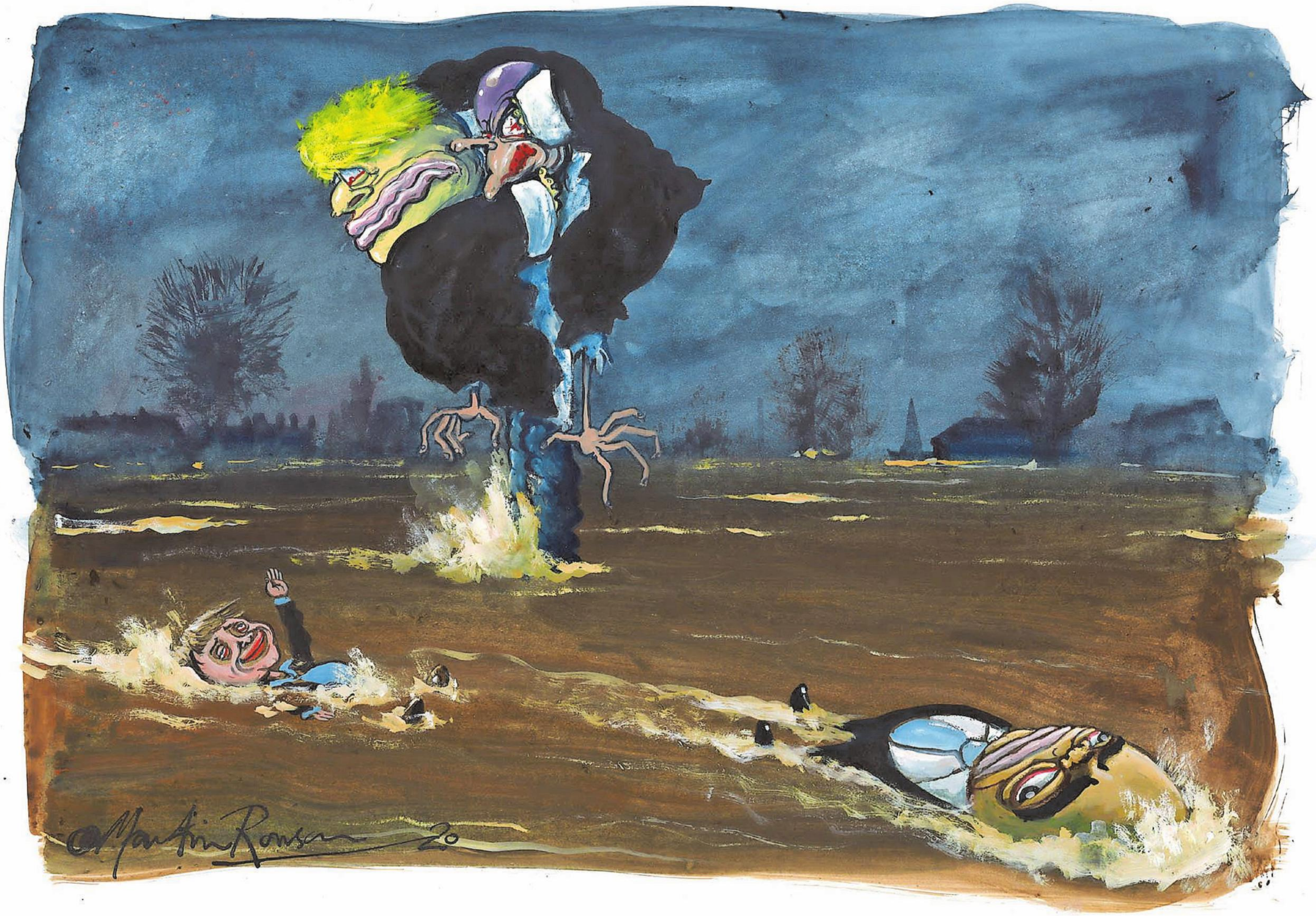
At this moment of Cummings' triumph over Javid the most intriguing question for concerned citizens not obsessed with *Love Island* or a flooded basement to ask themselves is: "How long will Dom last now that he's made himself the story?" On Sunday I thought Christmas sounded about right. By mid-week I'm not so sure. Easter?

But the real mistake here isn't misfit Dom's choice of weirdo staff or outfit, not even misfit Cummings himself. He's important because he has the confidence and convictions which Boris the Blusterer lacks, Dom the Disrupter who wants to pull down 'failed' institutions as much as any teenage Corbynite.

Boris needs him because he's a loner with no natural allies, a Heseltine without Hezza's self-made millions or experience. Cummings is the autocrat's *consiglieri*, his office wife.

No, the real mistake is to think you can centralise the reins of government and run the show from No.10. A PM, especially a lazy details-averse one, must trust competent lieutenants, even nurture a few as possible successors, Mrs Merkel.

He or she must also encourage



independent thinking, expertise and pushback. Margaret Thatcher, who worked 18 hours a day, fell when she forgot that. What's more, a centraliser who takes the credit also has to take the blame. Poll tax, anyone? Boris Island? Irish Sea bridge?

The autumn's COP26 climate change conference in Glasgow – if it stays there – is apparently in poor planning shape, further disrupted by Claire Perry O'Neill's sacking. If beyond rescue – these events take lots of staff work – it is another opportunity lost to the Brexit vortex. Last weekend, Britain's Nato allies – Nancy Pelosi among them – commented adversely on its conspicuous absence from the annual Munich Security Conference. Jittery defence secretary Ben Wallace stayed in London and kept his job.

His deputy went, only to be fired. The new boy arrived in time to fly home. Names? It barely matters, the vassal turnover is so high.

Yet friends and allies are people with whom Global Britain needs to make urgent trade deals at a time when events – as ever – are forcing it to pick sides. On Huawei 5G technology Johnson backed China and the EU, thereby annoying Australia (whose MPs cancelled a trade trip) as well as "apoplectic" Trump. So Boris's early trip to Washington has been postponed. Team Trump casually suggests that Silicon Valley might like to buy up Eriksson or Nokia, the EU firms that can match Huawei, to help the US catch up. Boris is offered a Chinese deal to build HS2 faster and cheaper and boost employment (in China).

Neither of which will happen. But being prime minister is not like being London mayor, a relatively sheltered harbour. Was it Cummings who leaked the budget "mansion tax" idea to weaken Javid among Tory supporters? Some think so. Is it Cummings who is driving the campaign to wreck the BBC, part of the government's 'economic shift to the left, cultural shift to the right' tactics? Tuesday's edition of *The Times* led on "Johnson at odds with Cummings over BBC". This is madness. Different madness from pointlessly moving the House of Lords to York – peers to man the flood defences? – but equally mad in its own way.

* * *

David Frost's aggressive trade talk in Brussels on Monday night is at least substantial. Yet it need not alarm us much at this stage. It is populist posturing for domestic consumption, much as robust noises coming out of Paris this week have been. Frost says the UK wants the same limited free(ish) trade deal that Canada and others have, not "dynamically aligned" to current and future EU regulations and not subject to arbitration by the European Court of Justice (ECJ). Given that most of the world accepts 'equivalence' standards, he has a point.

The EU27 counters that Perfidious Albion is too big and too near to permit that, fearful as it is of a low regulation Singapore-on-Trent which some cabinet fantasists – Raab and Patel – hanker for out of animal spirits and ignorance. Paris wants to go further than Brussels. Naturally. The French have climate change alignment in their sights, as if Polish coal sold to anti-nuclear Germany and Hungarian climate nationalism are not enough to worry about. Spain wants Gib back, Greece wants those marbles. Is everyone losing theirs?

The posturers are all bluffing because they all have too much to lose. Of course, the ECJ will have a role in arbitrating UK-EU trade disputes, as happens in the Byzantine structures which have governed the Union's dealings with Norway and Switzerland for decades. The issue will be fudged, as they were when Boris triumphantly fudged the Withdrawal Agreement. Tory MPs will cheer just as Republicans did when President Trump was "acquitted" by a Cummings-like jury. Our economy is fragile but so is Germany's export-led model in its own way. Emmanuel Macron may be grinding down opponents of his tax reforms, but he just lost his candidate for Paris mayor to a squalid sex scandal.

None of which is to say it might not go horribly wrong. The Treasury has been weakened by Cummings's assault on its independence and if chancellor Sunak cannot keep the grip on levels of tax and spending then markets will eventually take notice. Like Javid, Sunak is said to be a fiscal conservative who does not want to over-borrow. But both were investment bankers associated with over-borrowing that crashed the global economy in 2008-9. Governments can always rescue the banking system, which is as indispensable to our world as the sewage system, but not so sweet or useful. But who rescues governments when they get it wrong – as autocratic regimes so easily do? They do because they can debauch the tax system and run up debt while controlling the printing presses. You don't need to think South Africa or Iran. It's what Donald Trump seems to be bent on doing.

Everyone says Sunak is a nice young man, honest too. Let's hope so because not many people can have said that about Boris and there's no obviously wholesome figure in cabinet to hold back his baser instincts now that Geoffrey Cox QC has been replaced as attorney general by Brexit groupie Suella Braverman. As her US counterpart, Trump loyalist Bill Barr showed in his protest against interference by Tweet last week, when the slippery slope to lawlessness gets steeper, it is sometimes too late to shout "That's enough."

You don't have to love it, but you must defend it

For all its failings, the BBC needs your support

JAMES BALL'S DECONSTRUCTED

In the midst of last year's parliamentary battles on Article 50 and the Withdrawal Agreement – and Labour's struggle to find a Brexit position it could stick with – a senior opposition frontbencher, and lifelong Eurosceptic, sat down to explain their shifting opinion on leaving the EU.

This individual had always had deep misgivings about the European Union, and still held many of those. But, the shadow frontbencher noted, one of the key lessons that decades in politics had taught them was to look at who was happiest at any given event or decision – and work backwards from there.

All the wrong people were happy at the idea of Brexit and how it was going, they reasoned. So perhaps their own stance was the wrong one.

This pragmatic assessment might be one for many on the left – and many who were fervent backers of Remain and the People's Vote campaign – when it comes to the woes the BBC is facing from the newly-confident majority Conservative government.

Attacks on the Corporation from government are hardly anything new. Under David Cameron, the BBC had to accept significant cuts to its budget, as well as shouldering the responsibility (and huge cost) of free licence fees for the over-75s.

But what's coming now is on a different scale entirely. The new government first announced it was looking to decriminalise non-payment of the TV licence – a reasonable-sounding move, but one which could cut the BBC's income by 10% at a stroke – and then quickly moved on to a front page last weekend suggesting that ministers would end the BBC licence fee altogether.

Many on the left, and now many members of the pro-Remain cause, have long regarded the BBC with suspicion at best and outright hostility at worst. Labour leadership and deputy candidates have this week offered only the faintest of warm words towards the BBC when questioned on the threats it faces. Execs at the corporation would be right to be worried.

NATIONAL INSTITUTION: The BBC is responsible for shows such as *Mrs Brown's Boys*, above right, and *Strictly Coming Dancing*. 2019 winners Oti Mabuse and Kelvin Fletcher, below Photos: Contributed

At least some of the criticism is justified – the BBC, like every other institution, is far from perfect.

Some of its natural instincts on balancing panels, leaving the job of challenging claims to political opponents, and similar matters, doubtless helped Leave politicians. The BBC can certainly sometimes be accused of promoting loud voices over insightful ones.

But despite the frequency with which the allegation is made, accusing it of being an extension of the Conservative Party smacks of ridiculousness, and a lack of ability to tell the difference between a flawed attempt at decent news and a cheerleader for your own side.

If nothing else evidenced this, the months-long blockade of the flagship *Today* programme – and its seven million or more listeners – by the government speaks volumes. That it would offer no minister to reassure the public in the mornings following terror attacks or natural disasters speaks ill of the government, but also speaks of its sincerity and bitterness in its feud with the show.

The determination of some within the Conservative Party to gut the BBC or end it entirely should send the only signal those on the left should need to see what the UK media landscape would look like without it – and which side they think such a move would favour.

The UK's highest circulation newspaper is *The Sun*, owned, alongside *The Times* and *Sunday Times*, by Rupert Murdoch. They all generally back Conservative Party positions, except when Labour looks extremely likely to win election victory.

The next highest-circulating newspaper – and the most politically powerful in the country – is the *Daily Mail*, controlled by the multi-millionaire Viscount Rothermere. *The Telegraph* is owned by the multi-millionaire Barclay brothers, while the *Financial Times* is owned by Nikkei, and while more liberal than the others could hardly be described as left-wing.

Those looking for a left-wing media are left with *The Guardian* – hardly a darling of the Corbyn left, but genuinely owned by a not-for-profit trust with quality journalism at its heart – and the left-leaning *Mirror*. The latter, however, is owned by the same publishing house that puts out the *Express* and *Sunday Express* – not newspapers noted for their commitment to left-wing or liberal causes.

Anyone looking at the absence of the BBC, or at a drastic cut to its capabilities, needs to be realistic about what else exists in the UK media ecosystem. It is the existing outlets that would be best placed to expand and fill the void, and they lean overwhelmingly to the right.

The other broadcast news channels may be more impartial – thanks if nothing else to the Ofcom rules that cover all of them, including the BBC – but are largely fed by the print media and news wires. None of them have newsgathering operations on anything like the scale of the BBC.

The BBC as a national project – a public broadcaster, rather than a government one – has always survived only because enough people believe in it and its work. It has had detractors for decades, as well as jealous commercial rivals looking at its reach and audience with envy.

Even if it picks a brilliant and battling new director general to fight for its future, it will rely on much wider political and public support to survive this government intact. It will need full-throated support from Labour frontbenchers, from prominent commentators, and from those newspapers not plotting its demise. Most of all, it will need support from the public.

To see what a news landscape without something like the BBC looks like, we need only turn to the US. There, the most avid news consumers are left only with hyper-polarised cable TV. Most of us know about Fox 'News' – a channel so dedicated to the promotion of president Trump that it abandons any vestige of truth – but even MSNBC, its liberal counterpart, largely focuses on ultra-liberal content in the evenings, occasionally bordering on conspiracism.

Were a Fox News viewer to meet an MSNBC viewer, they would have seen totally different headlines for weeks, months, or years, with virtually no overlap. They would have no shared truths to start from, no shared facts to debate. They would only see the others' ignorance or denial of what, to them, was a huge scandal, reported night after night. The result can only be a shouting match.

Having a huge outlet with a mass audience that is at least attempting to be fair, to stick to the most important stories on a given day, and to give people a shared understanding of the world to interpret through their own lens is crucial to our democratic society. It gives us the basis to debate, instead of to shout at each other. And it serves as a counterweight to the natural bias of the UK's print and online media.

The BBC will need to change to survive. It will need to understand why younger generations are not embracing it like our parents – or even our older siblings – did. It will need to do more to support local journalism, and independent journalism, and not have an insular BBC-or-bust attitude. It will need to come up with plans to regain trust, and to educate audiences to become better at navigating the media.

Most importantly, it will need to learn how to talk to the public in an age where authenticity is valued more than authority.

If it's willing to make that effort, the BBC will find its prospects are better than Boris Johnson's majority of 80 might suggest. Despite a *Times* front page declaring the days of the licence fee over, the government already appear to be rowing back – with "sources" suggesting Dominic Cummings may have gone too far, again.

The BBC doesn't just make news and current affairs. It broadcasts *EastEnders*, *Strictly Come Dancing*, *Best Home Cook*, *DIY SOS*, *Pointless*, *The One Show*, *The Archers* and *Mrs Brown's Boys* (the most successful comedy in a decade).

People love these shows and the familiarity of them. Crucially, at present, there is no easy way to put them behind a subscription wall without requiring radical (and expensive) changes to how broadcasting works in the UK. It would be a very brave Conservative government indeed that suddenly cut off older voters from their favourite television and radio.

As soon as any concrete plans for a world with a radically-smaller BBC are laid out, they will be unpopular with many Conservative voters, and with their MPs too. Even the BBC's commercial rivals might find the reality of proposals daunting. In an era of dwindling circulations, it is the clout of the BBC picking up stories that keeps papers relevant, and helps them run the political agenda. Its rivals might quickly find themselves changing tack.

The threat facing the BBC is the most serious in its 98-year lifespan. It will survive to see its 100th birthday. If it wants to see 120, let alone 200, it will need help. Its critics may wish to think hard about what the world would look like without it now, while it can be saved, rather than regret their mistakes once it was gone.

What is Beeb's beef with Europe?

Why is the BBC's coverage of politics in the US so much more extensive than its reporting of it in Europe, asks DENIS MacSHANE?

Morning, noon and night on the BBC we have, of late, been getting endless coverage of the US Democratic Party nomination process. Star reporters like Jon Sopel have been providing excellent quality narratives of the ups and downs of politicians we had never heard of a few months ago and will have forgotten by the autumn. This coverage has been backed by analysis driven by the Corporation's swollen Rolodex of American political consultants, pollsters and experts who are on tap to perform on *Today* and *Newsnight*.

It is all enjoyable stuff – and important too. The US is the most important world power and who governs it matters to all of us. But, like it or not, with or without Brexit, Britain is more closely affected by what happens across the Channel than across the Atlantic. As Churchill liked to say, our political weather comes from Europe.

With an eternity of Brexit lying ahead of us, touching on everything from health cover for millions of British holidaymakers to the future constitutional place of Scotland or Northern Ireland in the UK, this has never been more true.

Yet the coverage on the BBC of politics in Europe on its main outlets, especially in comparison to the Corporation's extensive treatment of the goings-on in the US, is nugatory to the point of being non-existent.

Germany is being convulsed by its biggest crisis since the founding the Federal Republic 70 years ago. The designated successor of Angela Merkel as chancellor, Annette Kramp-Karrenbauer, has been forced to stand down in the most humiliating circumstances, after she allowed the mighty ruling party of Germany, the Christian Democratic Union, to enter into a short-lived alliance with the far right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) to nominate a politician with no local support to head the government of Thuringia, in eastern Germany. This smashed apart the so-called *cordon sanitaire* by which the country's main parties have not entered into political arrangements with the AfD. Germany now faces permanent political instability as various men fight it out to be Merkel's successor.

Meanwhile, across the Rhine and closer to us, president Emmanuel Macron is facing rising opposition to his one-man rule. His liberal plans, like the efforts of Harold Wilson and Edward Heath to reform labour relations in Britain in the 1960 and 1970s, are not working.

His hard right opponent Marine Le Pen will win the key mid-term elections in thousands of cities, towns and communes next month. It is far from clear Macron can win a second term in 2022.

So while politics in the US are gripping, so too are they in Europe. Yet the BBC does not seem to report them in the manner or detail that is does the events from across the ocean. Why is this?

There are obvious cultural reasons. For a start, the Corporation's main outlets are, for the most part, edited, produced, reported and presented by mono-lingual journalists. Some, of course, will have foreign correspondent experience or fluency in another language. But the news culture that most informs the BBC comes from the English-language, 24/7 American news blast. It is far easier to produce dramatic news stories and coverage of personalities like Joe Biden and Pete Buttigieg than their German, French or Spanish equivalents.

Perhaps there is also an idea among BBC executives that American politics is more exciting than that found across the Channel. The all-pervasive image of "Brussels bureaucrats" promoted by Eurosceptics probably has something to do with this perception. There is perhaps also an associated idea that events in Europe's chancelleries are of less consequence than those in the US.

On both counts, the assumption is wrong. Angela Merkel might not quite as box office as Donald Trump but European politics has enough sex scandals, corruption allegations and political chicanery to make the US president blush. And these events matter greatly to the UK.

The Corporation's comparative silence on European politics has had consequences, of course. A failure to adequately cover continental affairs was surely a factor in the 2016 referendum result. The BBC had, over the years, failed to explain that EU policy and politics is the outcome of national political processes in the EU member states. By not reporting European politics with anything like the same width, depth of knowledge and enthusiastic interest as it had US politics, the BBC had let down its viewers and listeners.

It requires little journalistic effort to make European politics come to life on radio, television or online. It is high time for BBC journalists to cross the Channel as often as the cross the Atlantic.

■ Denis MacShane is the former minister of Europe and once worked for the BBC as a presenter and reporter in local radio. His latest book is *Brexiternity: The Uncertain Fate of Britain* (IB Tauris); he writes on European policy and politics

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Dom might have a brain but he's missing a heart

Dominic Cummings is the epitome of everything he advocated rejecting, all the reasons he fabricated for leaving the EU. The 'unelected Eurocrats' spin was a lie; instead, decisions on our futures are now actually being made by faceless, unaccountable figures, not in some far-off, distant land, but within Downing Street itself.

So, now we're governed by unelected, cocksure hubris. Absolute unaccountability, zero democracy. Well done, Dom.

And yet, he is still fighting. It's still not enough. Even as the wheels begin to fall off one of the costliest, most dangerous vanity projects of an insecure little man in many decades, he is still not satisfied.

If he so desperately needs to prove his intellect, why not simply put himself at the head of the NHS, or the Universal Credit project? Turning around either of these, successfully, would win him international plaudits. But both would require compassion alongside an extraordinary mind.

Andy Valentine
Llanaelhaearn

Jacob
THE NEW EUROPEAN
BREXIT, BORIS, BULLYING AND MY BLOCKED PEERAGE
JOHNSON EXPOSED

Animal readers of THE NEW EUROPEAN

This is Jacob who reads *TNE* every week, bought by his faithful servant Corenza. His disdain for Boris Johnson is pretty obvious!

■ Does the animal who runs your household read *TNE*? Send photographic evidence and crucial biographical details to letters@theneweuropean.co.uk, putting 'Animal Readers' in the subject field.

"We did ask for a government minister to speak to us about flood defences and preparedness, but unfortunately no-one was available," *Channel 4 News* presenter Cathy Newman commented wearily on February 15 after the main item.

Here is the result of Cummings' boycott of non-compliant news media in favour of sycophantic ones, as seen in their unsuccessful attempt to segregate 'baddies' from 'goodies' in a recent Downing Street briefing. How long will the British public put up with his contemptuous attitude to scrutiny?

Rebecca Brown

Cummings' next move will be to get Johnson to walk away from the trade talks, blaming the EU's stance on fishing rights. Leavers will buy it yet again, thanks to his slogan.

Helen Hallam
Keighley

Cake d'oh

Mark Bates ("Remainer cakeism", Letters, *TNE* #182) might be missing the point of associate EU citizenship.

It would not and could not be an easy passage to living and collecting our pensions abroad. What it could do would be to show the EU, and our own government, that a considerable number of us are not going to give up on the European ideal without a fight.

The proposal has already gained support in other EU countries, especially those threatened with the rise of aggressive old nationalisms. I'd be happy to pay without expecting anything in return other than a card, or maybe a passport cover. I was surprised and pleased to see that the opportunity to vote for a number of 'unassigned' MEPs might be on the table. There is more information at stayeuropean.org.

Polly Brown
Glossop

If Mark Bates is suggesting that associate membership would allow Remainers to "have our cake and eat it", I point out that because of Brexit, we aren't actually *having* any cake, let alone eating it!

Marianne Crisp
Towcester

It is not "cakeism" to advocate associate citizenship when millions of us are being robbed of our rights against our will, without our consent.

In terms of cost, however, 500-1,000 euros is too high, especially annually. It must be no more expensive than a standard passport.

A particularly noxious line in Brexit rhetoric has been that EU membership is only of value to a privileged elite. EU citizenship, even a limited associate status, must not be unaffordable to those of us on low/precarious incomes.

Dr M M Gilchrist
Hull

The letter from SE Vickery about associate membership certainly gives credence to the fiction of Remainers being elitist and out of touch. A fee of 500-1,000 euros a year? When apparently about 50% of the population don't have £100 in savings? EU associate citizenship or food. Which to go for?

Bryan Wilson
Edinburgh

Coren blimey

Seeing the clip of the first meeting of the new cabinet reminded me of some of the Egyptian hieroglyphs on *Only Connect*: Liars' chorus, twisted facts, lie on and at least two weeds.

Phil Green

Having purged his party of moderate Tories and his cabinet of potential dissenters, thereby turning it into a politburo of parrots, Boris Johnson has now taken over the Treasury, and crowned himself, if not world king as was his childhood dream, effectively dictator of the United Kingdom.

I thought every one of us was meant to "take back control"? It seems only one guy has achieved that goal.

Paul Smith

Troubled water

Boris Johnson will go down history as Bogus Bridges Boris. As the Scotland to Northern Ireland bridge may pass over a million tonnes of arms and two tonnes of nuclear waste, even though it won't ever be finished we might at least get a super fireworks display out of it.

Roger Watts
Walsall

The idea of a bridge between Scotland and Northern Ireland is certainly silly, but the proposal for a rail tunnel between Portpatrick in Wigtownshire and Whitehead in County Antrim has been around since 1890 and makes much better sense in an age of increasing public transport. However, it should wait for Scottish independence and Irish reunification, at which point it will become an important EU infrastructure project.

Philip Stewart
Oxford

The copious comments about the suggested bridge between Scotland and Northern Ireland have inspired me to quote a few lines of a poem about a doomed bridge:

'Twas about seven o'clock at night,
and the wind it blew with all its might;
And the rain came pouring down,
and the dark clouds seem'd to frown;
And the demon of the air seem'd to say:
'I'll blow down the bridge of Bojo.'

With thanks to William Topaz McGonagall and his immortal lines on the Tay Bridge disaster of 1879. I claim artistic licence for the alternative last word!

Robert Boston
Kingshill

Eirebrushed

It is quite extraordinary how rapidly the BBC has rushed out a little video entitled *Ireland elections: busting five myths*, all designed to show how the recent extraordinary success of Sinn Féin had nothing to do with Brexit or the border and everything to do with issues like homelessness and health.

I don't doubt for a minute that issues like housing shortages were cited as much more important on the doorstep. But the fact remains that what everyone knows Sinn Féin stands for, a united Ireland, no longer made it impossible to vote for them in the Republic. They have come in from the cold.

It is surely very difficult even for the BBC to suggest that their acceptance has nothing to do with people's perceptions that given the problems Brexit will cause, a united Ireland inside the EU may be the only way of solving the problems Ireland will face.

Dr Mark Corner
Lecturer, University of Leuven

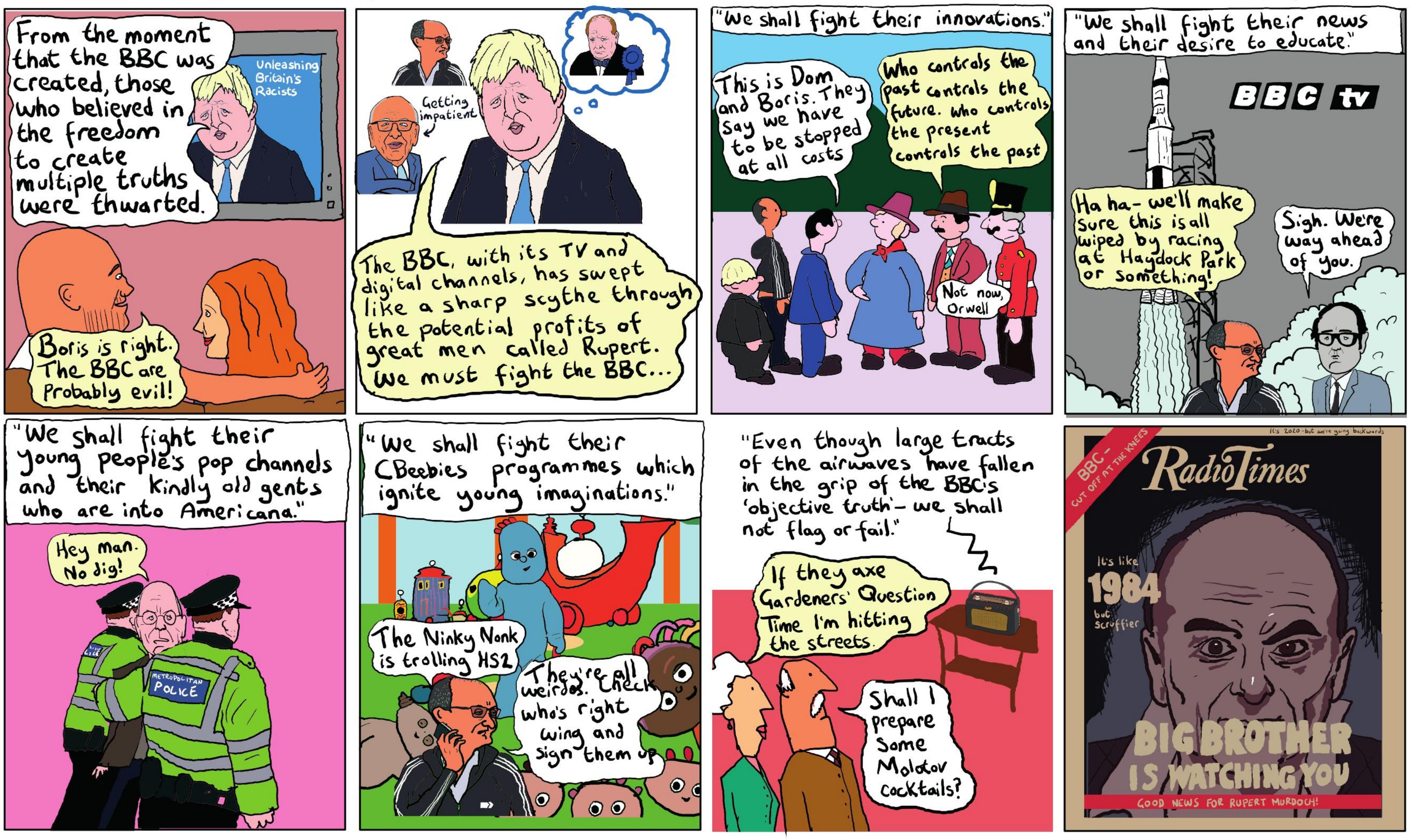
Andrew Adonis ("Ireland beyond the watershed", *TNE* #182) advises Sinn Féin to focus on local politics rather than Irish reunification should they make it into government. This misses the point. Sinn Féin don't have to worry about unification because Boris Johnson is going to hand it to them on a plate.

All 27 EU members will need to ratify a UK-EU trade deal. Ireland will merely have to make a reunification referendum a condition of their ratification, and Boris will have no choice but to grant it.

The fact that he won't lose a minute's sleep over dumping Northern Ireland will just make the whole thing even easier. The Conservative and Brexit Party has eclipsed the Conservative and Unionist Party.

What's going on? Can this Gvt. keep us safe from the BBC?

TIM BRADFORD


From the moment that the BBC was created, those who believed in the freedom to create multiple truths were thwarted.
Unleashing Britain's Racists
Boris is right. The BBC are Probably evil!
Getting impatient
The BBC, with its TV and digital channels, has swept like a sharp scythe through the potential profits of great men called Rupert. We must fight the BBC...
"We shall fight their innovations."
This is Dom and Boris. They say we have to be stopped at all costs
Who controls the past controls the future. who controls the present controls the past
Not now, Orwell
"We shall fight their news and their desire to educate."
BBC tv
Ha ha - we'll make sure this is all wiped by racing at Haydock Park or something!
Sigh. We're way ahead of you.
"We shall fight their young people's pop channels and their kindly old gents who are into Americana."
Hey man. No dig!
METROPOLITAN POLICE
"We shall fight their CBeebies programmes which ignite young imaginations."
The Ninky Nonk is trolling HS2
They're all weirdos. Check who's right wing and sign them up
"Even though large tracts of the airwaves have fallen in the grip of the BBC's 'objective truth' - we shall not flag or fail."
If they axe Gardeners' Question Time I'm hitting the streets.
Shall I prepare some Molotov cocktails?
It's 2020 - but we're going backwards
BBC - CUT OFF AT THE KNEES
Radio Times
It's like 1984 but scruffier
BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU
GOOD NEWS FOR RUPERT MURDOCH!

This gives Sinn Féin little else to do but focus on those self same 'local' issues – housing and health – they will need to address if joining the south is to appeal to those in the north.

Peter Haydon
London SE24

STV for me

I enjoy Michael White's excellent analysis of the news each week, but I would challenge one word in this week's column ("Swimming with sharks" *TNE* #182). This is 'tortuous' in describing the Irish electoral system, STV. It is true the counting method is complex, which is necessary to give the benefits it does, but STV is easy to understand and use for the voter, who just puts his preferences for the candidates (1, 2, 3… as far as he or she wants) against the candidates' names.

Opponents of reform like to claim that its impenetrable complexity rules it out as a serious possibility for reform, or even as an alternative to the widely-discredited FPTP. Many electoral reformers consider STV in multi-member constituencies as the best system yet devised for electing an assembly.

It is far from untried. In Ireland it has twice been endorsed in referendums by the public, who like it, called by politicians who don't, wanting more say in who is elected (e.g. through safe seats, plentiful with FPTP, ruled out by STV).

It is used in Northern Ireland for their assembly, as it gives a fair deal to both sides of the community. It is also used in Scotland for local elections. If it is good enough for Ireland and Scotland, is it too difficult for the English to grasp?

We have the worst electoral system in Europe, let's campaign to have the best.

David Brandwood
Broadstone

++GRASSROOTS NOTICEBOARD++

Thursday, February 27 – EU in Brum are holding the first (of hopefully many) Euro Cafe events at Maison Mayci, 148, Alcester Road Moseley, Birmingham. 6.30pm to 8.30pm. All EU citizens and pro Europeans welcome.

Saturday, February 29 – A Euro Cafe to be held in Leamington Spa between 10.30am and 12.30pm at All Saints Church, Victoria Terrace.

To help keep the pro-European movement connected, please post details of any relevant events here, and on our Facebook page. Email information to theneweuropean@archant.co.uk

It was very disappointing to read Michael White sniping at the SNP. Despite the Tories' desperate attempt to shift the blame for austerity on to the Scottish government, the SNP has run Scotland as competently as anyone can with one hand tied behind their back.

For instance, homelessness has almost halved (up 40% in England) in the last decade. We still have free university tuition, free prescriptions and the bedroom tax has effectively been abolished. Police numbers never fell as they did down south, and local government has been spared the worst of the savage cuts suffered by English local authorities.

Dr Michael Lloyd
Dunbar

No smoke

Germany's Jaenschwalde coal-fired power station may or may not be among the biggest single producers of carbon dioxide emissions in Europe ("Consensus on climate could go up in smoke", *TNE* #182). I am not familiar with it.

But what I do know is that it doesn't emit carbon dioxide via its cooling towers. Cooling towers do not emit "exhaust plumes". I will not say what cooling towers do emit but if you object to that white stuff I suggest you stop boiling your kettle.

Ian Sheppard
Kirkcudbright

Zoe Williams is right to stress the equal dangers of complacency and despair over the world climate crisis. A century ago the potential danger of greenhouse gases was first recognised and 40 years ago we were campaigning for 'alternative/clean/safe' energy. Yet we did not impact on the vested interests of the fossil fuel industries nor awaken public awareness of the ever-pressing threat. That is changing but we now recognise the scale of the problem and the urgency for last-minute solutions.

Past extinctions have been triggered by outside, natural forces. In preventing one created by our civilization, we face a unique challenge, unparalleled in planetary history.

Christopher Sparey-Green
London SE1

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Alastair Campbell

Editor-at-Large

Albania has suffered a physical and political earthquake..

And the tremors from the latter could be felt by all of Europe

APPEALS: Left, Albanian prime minister Edi Rama in Brussels this month. Far left, British-Kosovan singer Dua Lipa during a concert held in Pristina in 2016. Dua was born in London in 1995 to ethnic Albanian parents from Kosovo who had left Pristina in the 1990s

Photos: Getty Images

On Monday, the leader of a European country went to Brussels to ask for help. The country is Albania, and prime minister Edi Rama's plea followed a major earthquake last November which killed 51 people, injured many more, left thousands homeless and reduced hundreds of buildings to rubble.

Measuring 6.4 on the Richter scale, it was 2019's deadliest earthquake, anywhere in the world.

The country's emergency services reacted pretty well in the immediate aftermath, rescued many, and worked well with the expert help sent from abroad. But once the dead were buried, and the immediate shock subsided, came the longer-term reckoning about the cost of rebuilding the shattered buildings, roads and bridges. Around a billion euros. Money that a small, poor country like Albania can ill afford. Hence Rama's mission to the donors' conference in Brussels.

I am guessing you might vaguely be aware the earthquake happened. It could not compete with whatever Donald Trump was tweeting that day, and the UK election was in full swing, but it made the back end of a few bulletins. When Dua Lipa and Rita Ora expressed solidarity on social media, even the tabloids, grateful for the chance to use pictures of sexy pop stars, got a little bit interested.

Dua Lipa, one of several children of Kosovar Albanian parents who went to the same school as my daughter Grace, then released a charity T-shirt to raise funds for the victims, which got the celebrity sites excited.

It was around the time she and Grace were starting primary school in the late 1990s that I was first developing a keen interest in the Balkans, especially Kosovo and Albania. The Blair-haters like to define Iraq as the totality of the New Labour record on foreign policy, which has created the strange virus of which I wrote here recently, causing Labour leadership contenders to feel they can say nothing bad about Jeremy Corbyn, who lost two elections and so delivered very little by way of real progress for real people, and nothing good about triple winner Tony Blair, who delivered much.

It also overlooks the remarkable role TB played in reversing Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic's ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians. I still get Kosovan taxi drivers in London refusing to take a fare out of thanks for the role the Blair government played there, and I have met some of the children in Pristina, the Kosovan capital, who were named 'Tonibler' in recognition of the leader their parents' view, with Bill Clinton, as their saviour.

Fast forward a decade or so from the conflict in Kosovo, and I get contacted out of the blue by Edi Rama, then leader of the opposition Socialist Party, and asked to help with his election campaign. It was partly his personality, but also his evident support for and understanding of the principles underlying New Labour's approach to policy and campaigns, that made me say yes.

Formerly an international basketball player and a successful artist, he has a quirky, intelligent mind, is well read and thinks big for his small country. Two election wins later, he has now been prime minister for seven years, and though the leader of a country like Albania will never be able to compete for attention with the Trumps and the Johnsons, the Macrons and the Merkels, he has a strong reputation in diplomatic circles (not least with the German chancellor, who has been an important ally).

When he spoke in Brussels on Monday – an event about which you are probably learning about for the first time, given the general and growing insularity of our media – he could have stuck to the relatively easy pitch… 'we are poor, you are rich. We had a terrible tragedy, we need your money to rebuild our country, so here I am, cap in hand, begging for your support. Please give generously'.

Of course, he did a bit of that, gave them the stats about the deaths and the damage and the kind of sums they needed to get the country back on its feet.

But he did something else. He explained that there are physical earthquakes, and there are political earthquakes, and that Albania was hit by both types last year. While for the families of the 51 people who died, the physical earthquake was the worst thing ever to befall them, for the country as a whole, and Albanians all over the world, he said the political earthquake a few weeks earlier had been "a body blow" which left them feeling "hurt, shocked, humiliated".

He was speaking of the decision, led by France, to prevent Albania and North Macedonia, both 'official EU candidate countries' from beginning official membership talks. The reason Albanians felt so distraught, he said, was because they had undergone huge reforms, not least to previously corrupt legal and judicial systems, winning US and EU support every step of the way. Macedonia even endured the humiliation of changing its name to North Macedonia to address some of the political issues the EU wanted resolved. To no avail.

"Please, please, understand, and appreciate, the depth of our feelings," Rama said on Monday. "They spring from our understanding and appreciation of the good your Union does in the world, and our desire to be part of that. But they spring too from frustration – we did everything that was asked of us, yet the answer was 'no'. All guidelines and directives followed. But the answer was 'no'."

He went on: "I thought long and hard about using the word earthquake to describe both of these awful events. I am here after all to ask for your help, and perhaps some might take me amiss on what I have said about the politics. But I feel it is important to spell it out… for the November earthquake, the price is very clear, and we must try to raise the funds as best we can.

"For the political earthquake of October, how do you calculate the price of

DISASTER: A boy makes his way to back to home through the ruins of a collapsed buildings in Thumane, northwest of Tirana after a 6.4 magnitude quake shook Albania on November 26, 2019, the most deadly and destructive in four decades, leaving 51 lives lost and more than 15,000 people displaced

Photo: Getty Images

hope that suddenly feels shattered? It is a high price, not measurable in euros or any other currency."

There was a risk in Rama being so blunt about the damage he felt the Macron-led rejection did to his country. But perhaps he was encouraged by comments the French president made last weekend at the Munich Security Conference. "We are waiting for the [Commission] report in March," he said. "Depending on that, if the results are positive and confidence is established, then we should be in a position to open the negotiations." That sounded like a change of tone, at least, giving himself the opening to a change of tack.

It is one of the great ironies of Brexit that as we leave the EU, others are so desperate to join, and that support for the EU in existing member states is growing. The Albanians, even if they understand the difficult politics attached to the issue of poorer countries joining the bloc, were genuinely shocked that Macron, along with the leaders of the Netherlands and Denmark, did not share the view that membership talks could begin. So were other European leaders. Outgoing Commission president Donald Tusk said to the two Balkan countries: "Don't give up. You did your share and we didn't." Jean-Claude Juncker called it "a major historic mistake".

Many, chancellor Merkel among them, are worried about growing Chinese and Russian influence in the Balkans. Six states aspire to join the EU – Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Bosnia – and she is keen that all six see their future as European nations, and is aware of the risks if they don't, or can't. So, given history, should we all.

■ A footnote on that Munich Security Conference I mentioned. It is one of the most important defence and security gatherings of the year. Merkel and Macron were there. So was US secretary of state Mike Pompeo, his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, Nato boss Jens Stoltenberg, indeed the heads of most major international organisations like the World Bank and the World Health Organisation. Tony Blair and Hillary Clinton were there, as was David Miliband as head of the International Rescue Committee for refugees. Boris Johnson was offered the prime speaking slot, but turned it down. No UK defence or intelligence chiefs were sent. James Cleverly, newly appointed to the Foreign Office, was the only minister. Civil servants stood in for ministers on panels.

As *Sky News* defence correspondent Alistair Bunkall wrote: "If the government is serious about its much-repeated post-Brexit slogan of 'Global Britain' it must be at gatherings like this. Not just to show face, but to show commitment, strength, and purpose. Stay away and influence will ebb. You can't shape strategy if you're not present. Too many international figures already believe Britain is a diminished nation; that view has only strengthened this week."

He said the chief operating officer of the conference tweeted him with the hashtag #UKlessness. Truly, we are indeed becoming a footnote on the world stage. And we are doing it to ourselves.

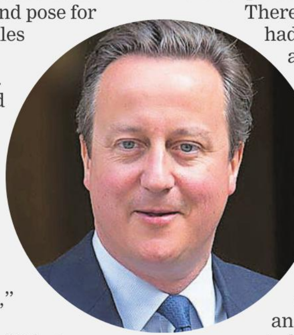
Mandrake

Tim Walker

mandrake@theneweuropean.co.uk @thattimwalker

Cameron: 'I won't talk about Brexit'

David Cameron – the Miss Havisham of British politics – made a rare outing last week to address a group of youthful volunteers from **Bono**'s outfit ONE UK and pose for pictures. The public smiles masked, however, much behind-the-scenes angst.



"We were all subjected to rigorous security checks ahead of his visit, which we felt was demeaning, given that we have all been involved with the organisation for some time and not exhibited any terrorist tendencies," one of the volunteers complains to Mandrake. "What was worse, we were ordered not to ask Cameron any questions about Brexit in the Q&A that followed his talk. His people weren't apparently happy even with that and decreed only questions that had been approved by them first could be asked."

There's no doubt that ONE is a worthwhile organisation – part of a global movement committed to ending extreme poverty and preventable diseases – but at least some of the volunteers were dubious about whether it was a great idea for them to be associating themselves with Cameron, *pictured*.

She adds it was hard not to see the irony in what Cameron, a board member of the outfit, chose to talk to them about: effective campaigning. "Clearly the campaign that Cameron will always be most remembered for will be the EU referendum, and, with the best will in the world, that could hardly have been described as very effective," she says. "I had a sense that we were all being used by him for a picture opportunity. I don't say he wasn't perfectly civil, but he wasn't with us for long and all that seemed to matter to him was getting a picture done and tweeted."

Nemesis

Kamal Ahmed, the BBC's £200,000-a-year editorial supremo, was seen as a favourite to succeed **Lord Hall** as director general until my foghorn-voiced mate **John Sweeney** called him out for trousering £12,000 for speaking at a bankers' conference days after the sacking of 450 staff.

Former *Panorama* man Sweeney pointed out this was not merely crass, but also not in keeping with the spirit, if not also the letter, of the corporation's editorial guidelines.

There's little moral authority to be had in being forced to apologise and to waive a fee, but both of these Kamal had to do.

At the launch of his thriller *The Useful Idiot* at the Polish Hearth Club, Sweeney got a laugh when he included Ahmed in his "apologies for absence" list, but later added that no serious journalist would ever have chased both power and money in the way that his erstwhile colleague had.

Lord Snooty

Mandrake wonders if **Charles Moore** – **Boris Johnson**'s former editor at the *Daily Telegraph* – isn't more of an influence over him than **Dominic Cummings**.

Moore's climate science scepticism and obsession with scrapping the BBC licence fee have all informed Johnson's thinking and I'm told the two Old Etonians confer regularly.

Once ridiculed as "Lord Snooty" by *Private Eye*, Moore is tipped to be made a peer by Johnson. On one issue only would they appear to disagree: Moore is a Catholic convert, whereas Johnson switched from Catholicism to Anglicanism.

Pole envy

One might have hoped, what with the coronavirus, the weekend storms and the aftermath of his shambolic cabinet reshuffle, **Boris Johnson** would have more important things to worry about than a flagpole, but it appears not.

Mandrake hears the PM wants a bigger pole erected over 10 and 11 Downing Street so he can hoist a flag even higher. He got an application into Westminster Council late last month and Historic England are now being consulted because of the properties' listed status. A decision is expected by the end of March.

No word about what flag Johnson wants to fly: probably a St George's as a Union Flag would seem provocative in all the circumstances. **Dominic Cummings** would probably prefer an anarchist flag.

Photos: Getty Images

AGENDA

Sex scandal sets scene set for

JASON WALSH on an intriguing election for the city's mayoralty... and a possible springboard to the presidency

INCUMBENT: Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo with police evacuating migrants on the streets of the city
Photo: Getty Images

France goes to the polls next month in nationwide municipal elections. The most eye-catching of the contests is in Paris, where a bizarre sex scandal has pushed out a challenger, leaving incumbent mayor Anne Hidalgo likely to triumph – placing her in a strong position to run for higher office in the future.

French mayors are powerful, Paris most of all, and a mayoralty is a potential springboard to the presidency. Certainly, many believe that the socialist Hidalgo has her sights set on the Élysée, though for her part she has always denied having designs on the highest office in the land.

In any case, Paris is a key battleground in a febrile French political landscape – and the conflict is rather different from the recent left-wing revolts of the unions and *gilets jaunes*.

If French president Emmanuel Macron has a base – and it is beginning to look as though his popularity is fragmenting as rapidly as it came together – then it is in Paris. The capital voted for him in large numbers in 2017: he won 34% of ballots in the first round of the presidential election and 90% in the second, when he faced-off against Marine Le Pen.

It is bad news for Macron, then, that the Socialist Party, still in crisis following the drubbing he delivered, is ahead in the polls with Hidalgo seeking to return to office on the basis of her own work rather than party loyalty.

Socialists building municipal redoubts against national winds of change is nothing new, of course: think Ken Livingstone in London under Thatcher, Militant Labour in Liverpool or even Bernie Sanders in Burlington, Vermont. Hidalgo is not universally popular, though.

Filmmaker Jean-Pierre Jeunet, director of *The City of Lost Children* and *Delicatessen*, made waves in 2019 saying "Paris is too ugly". Jeunet complained he could not make a sequel to his acclaimed love story *Amelie*, in many ways a love letter to the city itself, because it had lost its charm due to the mayor's massive renovation works.

"There are building sites everywhere," he complained.

Many Parisians, tired of noise, dust, congestion, and ugly green and grey steel barriers, agreed. Yet with the Olympic games scheduled for 2024 more disruption is guaranteed.

Another controversial move was banning traffic from long portions of the quays of the Seine. Popular with those who can now stroll, run and jog along the river, it had the unintended consequence of increasing traffic and pollution elsewhere, with suburban commuters forced into streets built for horses and carts.

More popular is her support for running the metro 24 hours a day. How popular this would prove with unions remains to be seen though, and the stakes are high: Paris ground to a halt in December and January as they flexed their muscles against the government's planned pension reforms. The message was clear: close the metro and you close Paris. Still, metro hours have been extended on a trial basis.

Her long-term ambitions include a total ban on cars, making all public transport free, 50/50 male-female police recruitment, and allowing local areas to restrict short-term rentals such as Airbnb.

Plans to merge the first four *arrondissements* into one mega burgh, an act that would have not only have been unpopular with civil servants but also given her an electoral edge over her rivals, have been watered down.

Macron's hopes to take the city took a beating last week when his candidate, Benjamin Griveaux, withdrew after becoming embroiled in a sex scandal. Video footage of male genitalia, apparently sent by the married Griveaux to an alleged lover, was leaked.

"My family does not deserve this. No one, fundamentally, should be subjected to such violence," he told reporters.

Griveaux is now living under police protection following alleged threats, details of which have not been released.

The leaker, Russian artist Petr Pavlensky, said he exposed Griveaux because the politician preaches "family values".

"It doesn't bother me whatever sexuality they have, they can even f**k animals, no problem, but they have to be honest," he said.

For many, Griveaux's error hardly constitutes much of a scandal, but Pavlensky's bizarre history means *le sextape* has taken on a life of its own. A performance artist whose body is often his own subject, much in the mould of French body artist Orlan though with a political bent, Pavlensky is a Russian exile who won asylum in France after facing political pressure at home.

In 2012 he sewed his lips shut in support of fellow performance artists Pussy Riot. In 2013 he nailed his scrotum to the ground in Moscow's Red Square. In 2019 he was convicted of setting fire to the front of the former offices of the French central bank.

Pavlensky claims he plans to launch a "political porn" website he says will expose the hypocrisies of politicians. The controversy doesn't end there, though: left-wing investigative web site *Mediapart* claims Pavlensky has been wanted since January in connection with "acts of wilful violence with a weapon" following two alleged knife crimes at a New Year's Eve party.

He is reported to have handed himself in to police, telling Mediapart the alleged victims were accomplices in a police conspiracy against him.

With Griveaux out of the race, Macron's La République en Marche (LREM) party, despite fielding medical consultant and health minister Agnès Buzyn as his replacement, is doomed. Hidalgo is now all but guaranteed victory, something that would bring cheer to the decimated ranks of the Socialists.

OUT: Benjamin Griveaux announces his withdrawal from the campaign
Photo: Getty Images

First elected in 2014, three years before Macron rewrote France's electoral map, Hidalgo's fortunes have waxed and waned with the times. In 2018 her satisfaction rating dropped from 52% to 42%. This year Hidalgo moved her candidacy from the quiet 15th *arrondissement* on Paris's left bank to the hip and cool 'bobo' (bourgeois bohemian) Bastille in the 11th *arrondissement* in the east. One magazine described her as "queen of the bobos".

The Spanish-born Hidalgo is in some senses a classic French centre-left politician: a noted atheist, married to fellow politician Jean-Marc Germain, with a master's degree in trade unionism and a family history on the republican side of the Spanish Civil War. She has worked in both the public and private sectors (something American commentator Lewis Lapham once noted as an essential establishment credential anyone seeking for a career in politics in the US). Her appeal, like that of many centre-left politicians in recent decades, is to the affluent and the precarious, rather than the traditional working class or the truly rich. For now, she leads the pack with 23% support in the most recent poll. Conservative candidate Rachida Dati of the Republicans is in second place at 20%.

In fact Paris doesn't have just one mayor, it has one for each of the spiral of 20 *arrondissements*, as well as one, currently Hidalgo, overseeing the city as a whole.

In addition, the mayor of Paris also holds the position of president of the métropole of Grand Paris, a job that covers the somewhat notional 'Grand Paris', an attempt to integrate the urban core of Paris with its sprawling suburbs.

King Louis XIV famously tore down the walls of Paris as a show of strength: unlike other European monarchs, he was saying, I have no fear of either foreign invasion or being strung up by the people. To this day, though, the region is divided between the city proper and the outlying areas with the orbital motorway, the *périphérique*, as effective a barrier as

Paris match

any medieval wall. (Hidalgo says she will transform the ring road into a park by 2024).

Not all of the *banlieues* are the grey wastelands of unemployment and street violence of the popular imagination, populated by the angry children of immigrants walled into tower blocks. Once impoverished Montreuil, for instance, is now a haven for artists and hipsters, Vincennes and Versailles are, and always were, as bourgeois as west Paris, while many others, such as Saint-Germain-en-Laye, are pretty and well connected.

Nonetheless public transport is spotty in many – a fact underscored by the recent strikes that hammered the working and middle classes priced out of Paris but had little impact on wealthy urbanites – and the architecture and planning makes it clear just what is Paris and what is not.

If Paris is ever to come to terms with what it is – a tourist trap, a giant eco village, a finance hub, a millionaires' playground or a working city for everyone – then the mayor will have more say than most.

■ See pages 42-43 for the scandal shaming France's literary establishment

THE CANDIDATES

Meet the other hopefuls in the race to govern Paris

Agnès Buzyn, LREM/ MoDem joint candidate

Macron's replacement for Griveaux is a consultant haematologist and professor. Until her candidacy's announcement, she was minister for health.

Rachida Dati, The Republicans

Conservative candidate Dati, formerly seen as divisive, has been polling well. A one time protégé of former president Nicolas Sarkozy, she has something of a teflon touch, having survived three political scandals including allegations of receiving payments from the now on-the-run Nissan-Renault boss Carlos Ghosn, for whom she worked as an advisor.

Wallerand de Saint-Just, National Rally

Far-right lawyer de Saint-Just has no chance as Paris is far from being a hotbed of National Rally (formerly National Front) support, but is nonetheless a reminder of party leader Marine Le Pen's towering ambition.

Danielle Simonnet, France Unbowed

Candidate of the far-left party led by Jean-Luc Mélénchon, Simonnet says she wants to "re-humanise" a city she says is expelling the working and middle classes in favour of tourists, the rich and big business. She opposed the successful 2024 Olympic bid.

Cédric Villani, independent

With a carefully crafted image as an ascot-wearing eccentric, Villani was elected to parliament as a protégé of Macron's. The mathematician who works hard to appear as though he is a character from a steampunk bande dessinée (graphic novel) failed to win the endorsement of Macron's LREM party, and went on to pull a Macron on Macron, declaring himself independent from "political machinery" as a candidate "faithful to Parisians".

Compiled by Alexander Damiano Ricci from VoxEurop, a website covering European news and comment which publishes in 10 different languages. Find out more at www.voxeurop.eu/en

EURONEWS:

Spain set to consider legalising euthanasia

Spain might soon become the fourth EU member state, after Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, to authorise euthanasia after the introduction of new legislation. Before becoming a reality, the draft text of the law needs to go through the parliamentary health committee, and votes in the lower house and in the senate.

The law is the first to be proposed by the newly-born left-wing government led by the Spanish social democratic party (PSOE) and the far-left Podemos.

Although the coalition relies on a slim majority, well over half of lawmakers approved starting the bill's legislative journey – with 203 votes in favour out of a total of 350. The far-right party VOX and the conservative People's Party (PP), were the only ones to vote against it.

According to a survey by Metroscopica conducted in 2017, some 84% of Spanish citizens are in favour of the introduction of a law that establishes a right to die with dignity. This is the fifth time a draft bill on euthanasia has made it into the Spanish parliament. All previous attempts to establish a law failed.

RED FACES FOR ITALIAN MINISTERS AFTER GEOGRAPHY BLUNDER

The Italian government has announced a 123 billion euros plan to develop its southern regions. Prime minister Giuseppe Conte presented the strategy in Gioia Tauro, a town in Calabria. It focuses on bringing improvements to education and closing the north's historical advantages in technology.

However, the initiative got off to a bad start after the promotional leaflet distributed by the minister for territorial cohesion Giuseppe Provenzano featured images of the beautiful seaside landscape of Trieste... on the Adriatic coast of northern Italy.

The business paper *Il Sole 24 Ore* pointed out that, depending on one's perspective, Trieste might also count as a southern location – for instance, for those living in Bavaria, Germany.

GOING SOUTH: Italian prime minister Giuseppe Conte

Photo: Getty Images

AUSTRIA'S TEENS SHUN UNIVERSITY

The number of students enrolled in Austrian public universities has decreased by around 15,000 between 2015 and 2019, *Salzburger Nachrichten* reports. According to official data public universities received approximately 3,500 fewer registrations last year than 2016.

The minister for education, Heinz Faßmann argued that the trend reflects broader demographic ones, characterised by shrinking birth rates. Students' increasing interest in vocational schools ('*Fachhochschulen*') is also a factor, according to some experts.

However, there might be a third critical factor at play.

The results of a parliamentary hearing led by the opposition-party, SPÖ (the Austrian Social Democratic Party), point at a potential link between the introduction of a set of university regulations and the plunge in enrolments.

As of the 2019/20 academic year, new rules authorised Austrian universities to expand self-assessment tests for prospective students to new fields of study. Crucially, prospective students are often asked to pay a fee to take these tests and face a set of bureaucratic hurdles.

According to the Austrian Students' Union, the new measures are making young Austrians less likely to embark on a university path. The union criticised the education minister and called for the removal of barriers to free access to education. "Universities should not forge elites," it said.

THE NETHERLANDS GRAPPLES WITH ANTI-CHINESE RACISM

Radio 10, one of the Netherlands' oldest commercial radio channels, has been accused of racism for broadcasting a song blaming the country's Chinese community for the coronavirus.

The satirical song, played by DJ Lex Gaarthuis, was called *Prevention is better than Chinese* ("*Voorkomen is beter dan Chinezen*") – using a play on the words for "Chinese" and "cure", which sound similar in Dutch.

It talks about "stinky Chinese" and instructs listeners: "Don't eat Chinese food, then you won't have to be afraid."

Its broadcast prompted public outrage, with 57 Chinese organisations in the Netherlands accusing it of being "discriminatory" and "inciting hatred". The station and the DJ issued apologies. Earlier this month, Bruno Bruins, the Dutch minister of health, said he was "shocked" by discrimination faced by Asian people in the country, which is home to around 100,000 citizens of Chinese origin.

FIVE COUNTRIES BUCK THE TREND FOR WOMEN IN SCIENTIFIC SPHERE

What do Lithuania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Portugal and Denmark have in common? They are the only five countries in Europe where there are more women scientists and engineers than men.

According to 2017 Eurostat data, Lithuania leads the EU ranking with women making up some 57% of its scientists and engineers. However, at the European level, the proportion is still 59-41% in favour of men.

Luxembourg and Hungary feature the smallest proportion of women working in this field. The UK is in line with the continental average (41%).

Understanding why women are less represented in so-called STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields is one of the main challenges for researchers, scholars and institutions.

Whereas much of the debate focuses on discrimination, in 2018, a controversial study published in *Psychological Science* highlighted the existence of a "gender-equality paradox".

The researchers of the study argued that in countries where 'gender equality' was more advanced, relatively fewer women tend to work in STEM.

The consequence the authors of the study drew was: women don't opt for these fields by choice.

Last year, however, Harvard researchers investigated the study and claimed there were problems with its methodology.

AGENDA

Becky Long-Bailey and the bogus Brexit journey

Steve Anglesey

"I've been on a journey, to be honest, in relation to a public vote or a referendum," said Rebecca Long-Bailey just four months ago, breaking with Jeremy Corbyn to back holding one before a possible general election if necessary.

The Salford and Eccles MP's odyssey now appears complete after she told Andrew Marr it would be "absolutely disastrous to go into the next election advocating a position of rejoining the EU". What a long, strange trip it's been for her, back to square one.

Long-Bailey's latest campaign video features her being questioned by a couple of sixtysomething Leavers who say "the Labour party didn't listen to us over Brexit". How will she fix that? "We've got to move on and offer a vision of what Britain and what Salford looks like outside the EU," she says. "And that has to be positive because people don't vote for negative politicians, they don't vote for someone who's going to tell them how terrible their life's going to be. They only vote for someone who tells them how good life is going to be." In other words, never mind the detail when it's unicorns and sunlit uplands all round!

Long-Bailey hardly sounded like much of a Remainer to begin with. On June 13, 2016, she was tweeting, "EU far from perfect, needs reform but Tories would use OUT to destroy our workers rights and more + excuse for more austerity".

That was pretty much the half-hearted message Jeremy Corbyn took to the people so half-heartedly during the referendum. A look at RLB's Twitter timeline from the periods immediately pre- and post- that vote certainly give the impression that she cared as much, if not more, about securing Corbyn's job as Labour leader after the vote of no confidence in him on July 28, 2016, than she did about securing thousands more jobs along with Britain's place in the European Union. Then began Long-Bailey's long trek from Brexitshire to Remainia, there and back again, always in step with her silver-haired cheerleader John McDonnell. The Gandalf of Great Yarmouth, as vociferous a Brexit opponent as Steve Bray just eight short weeks ago, now says Labour should drop the whole issue for a generation.

This is extraordinary stuff from Labour's Marxist man of principle, suggesting that McDonnell had forgotten to tell us the Marx he had in mind was Groucho. He famously said, "Those are my principles, and if you don't like them... well, I have others."

Long-Bailey's own campaign website quotes her as saying that Labour needs "a leader who sticks to their principles and has the record to prove it." That's quite a contrast from her retreat on Brexit, and the revised verdict on freedom of movement which she gave to Marr.

"My own personal view is I am in favour of free movement, but we've got to be pragmatic and realise the position we're in," she said. Isn't this the kind of passive thinking which led to all the things Corbynism was meant to sweep away – the awful "controls on immigration" mug, the abstentions on the 2015 bill which cut welfare spending by £12 billion?

Meanwhile, though Long-Bailey is convinced Labour must change on Brexit, she's not keen on changing much else. "We must not go back to the politics of the past," says her website, and she's still backing the risible free broadband offer, the four-day week and other manifesto pipe dreams which helped deliver the worst election result since 1935. Somehow, she rates Corbyn's leadership as 10/10.

Still, if all that's required are a couple of presentational tweaks and a new Brexit policy of not mentioning Brexit, Labour are set fair to return to power in 2023 or 2024.

Never mind that 70% of Labour voters picked Remain in 2016. Never mind that the 2017 surge was built on Remainers flocking to Labour (the campaigner Matt Zarb-Cousin, now Long-Bailey's head of campaign communications, liked to say that Brexit "never came up on the doorstep" until a British Election Study report showed it was the key issue among those who switched to back Corbyn).

And never mind the internal Labour report on the December 12 debacle, which showed that the party lost 2.6 million voters between elections, with around 750,000 moving to the Lib Dems (presumably because they were more explicit in their opposition to Brexit) with 650,000 going to pro-Brexit parties, mostly to the Tories. The other 1.2 million simply stayed at home, presumably turned off by Mr 10/10 and the raft of daft non-Brexit policies which Long-Bailey now defends.

The call to arms on Long-Bailey's website ends by hailing her as one of a "new generation of socialist leaders who can unite all of our heartlands from Blyth Valley to Brixton."

It's a nice line, but she might just want to check the stats from 2016. Yes, Blyth Valley might have come in 60.4% for Leave. Brixton's home borough of Lambeth, however, went 78.6% Remain. Meanwhile a poll of all voters in the supposedly more Brexity north puts her 26% behind Keir Starmer.

If Rebecca Long-Bailey fancies another journey, where to begin?

CIRCUITOUS ROUTE: Labour MP Rebecca Long-Bailey has come full circle with her views on Brexit

Photo: Getty Images

STEVE'S SELECTION

PRITI PATEL

The home secretary added to her reputation for gaffes by telling *Kay Burley@Breakfast* on flooding: "The whole of government is working and empathising with the individuals that rightly have been affected." This was the least successful attempt at empathy since the 1992 US primaries, when George Bush went into a debate being told to sell the message that he cared, and said: "Message: I care".

Patel was mocked earlier in February after insisting she would lead a crackdown on "counter-terrorists".

She repeated variants of the phrase four times in a Sky News interview, promising: "Tomorrow we will also be announcing some fundamental changes to deal with counter-terrorism and counter-terrorism offenders."

COLIN BROWNING

This previously unknown Brexiteer caused Remainer delight with his tweet about a trip to Amsterdam: "Absolutely disgusting service at Schiphol airport. 55 minutes we have been stood in the immigration queue. This isn't the Brexit I voted for."

Naturally, this turned out to be yet another example of Leavers blaming Europeans for stuff that isn't their fault, and Browning later admitted: "I wrongly tweeted without knowing the facts. Schiphol have since clarified why the issue occurred and I apologise to them for my outburst."

Less amusing is the rest of the content of Browning's Twitter timeline, which features wisdom like "Give it five years and Sky Sports will be women, blacks & queers only presenting", and "God created Adam & Eve not Adam & Steve".

MARTIN DAUBNEY

The blue-suited chump who gifted the EU parliament with the same dignity and intelligence that he showed as editor of *Loaded* believes the next country to exit the European Union will be... Germany.

"If we can forge it on our own, we can go ahead and strike out and become a huge international force without the EU, (it will be) the Germans," he told the *Daily Express*.

"When they see the evidence that you can stand outside the EU, I think the dominoes are going to start toppling."

Good luck with that, Martin. Last month a poll showed Remain leading Leave in Germany by 72%-28%.

DOMINIC CUMMINGS

The Saj toppled! A racist superforecaster hired and let go! Yet more tea cosies worn as hats! It's been another crazy week in the world of Classic Dom and there looks to be more to come.

A BBC documentary about Boris Johnson's brain is planning to feature CBI man Colin Perry, who claims that two decades ago Cummings "seized me by the collar and tie, slammed me against the wall and raised his fist as if to hit my face."

And what brought on this alleged attack, which Cummings denies (he says the two men just "stumbled into each other")? Perry claims it happened when he accused Cummings of wanting the UK to leave the EU entirely, which Dom then called a "lie". Perish the thought!

EXPERTISE

EUROPE PIVOTS EAST

Brexit has prompted a rebalancing of the EU and enhanced the influence of Central European states, raising difficult questions about where it goes next. **JOHN KAMPFNER** reports

NEKÜNK MAGYA

FREEDOM TO ACT: Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban
Photo: Getty Images

On the first working day after Brexit where did Europe's most powerful man head off to? The French president paid homage to his Polish counterpart, in a sign that the European Union is already realigning, and not to the taste of the faint-hearted.

One of the many regrets of the UK's departure is that a project designed not only to bind the continent together, but also to embed a post-1945 settlement to a better world, is edging ever closer into the hands of countries whose elites have refused to make the transition from communism into liberal democracy.

Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are leading the charge back to authoritarianism. Their governments see Brexit in large part as a vindication of their positions – closed borders, tougher on immigration, populist nationalism, cronyism and curbs on civil liberties and freedom of expression. Indeed, they see it as encouragement to go further.

The departure of Britain removes from the equation a defender in international institutions of liberal norms. Of course, much of the rhetoric didn't translate into practice. But many in Europe, especially in the old Warsaw Pact, revered Margaret Thatcher for taking a hard line and encouraging Mikhail Gorbachev to press ahead with reforms in the 1990s.

This was followed by John Major helping to push through the enlargement of Nato and the EU. That was the era of Francis Fukuyama, his *End of History* thesis and an expectation that liberal democracy had entered a perpetual upward curve.

Now Britain has flipped to the other side of the culture war and is being feted by Central European leaders for exactly the opposite reasons. For the past decade the most visible and unabashed champion of the nationalist-populist cause has been Viktor Orban. Once a standard bearer in the fight against the communist regime, he has won three elections as prime minister. With each he has rolled back basic tenets of democracy such as the independence of the judiciary and freedom of the media.

He has now been gazumped by Poland's Law and Justice Party government. Recently president Andrzej Duda signed into law the so-called "muzzle law", which makes it illegal for the country's judges to openly question the government's judicial appointments and reforms. Boris Johnson's attacks on the BBC and the Supreme Court have not gone unnoticed.

His Rottweiler adviser Dominic

▶ Turn to page 24

From page 23

Cummings is attracting star billing in pro-government media in Central Europe, a status until recently reserved for the likes of Steve Bannon. If a country such as the UK is openly embracing such ideas, the argument goes in Budapest and Warsaw, then why the criticism directed at us?

The picture across the former Soviet states is not uniform, however. Last November in Prague, 250,000 people gathered not to celebrate the Velvet Revolution but to demand the resignation of the populist prime minister. Billionaire Andrej Babis, a media magnate and former communist who hates being called the Czech Trump, was recently investigated for fraud. No charges were brought, but he is having to tread a little more carefully. In Romania, the government has been embroiled in corruption allegations. Last year, Slovaks were shocked by a gangland-style murder of a journalist investigating corruption. The resulting election of an environmentalist campaigner, Zuzana Caputova, has tempered the right-wing ambitions of the government. Much rides on parliamentary elections coming up at the end of this month.

In one area these populist-nationalist governments are divided; on another they are surprisingly united. In the former case, some (Hungary, Czech Republic) are staunchly pro-Moscow, desperate to ingratiate themselves with Vladimir Putin; others are sceptical or hostile such as the Poles.

Brexit has, for all its negative influence, produced one positive outcome in Central and Eastern Europe. Now, not even the most hostile of hostiles would contemplate quitting the European Union thanks to the British debacle. They are in it for the long haul – which is both good and bad news for the established members.

In European institutions their clarion calls against immigration are beginning to stick. Member states are finding ever more inventive reasons for failing to fulfil their obligations towards freedom of movement. In important budget negotiations on February 20, the Central Europeans, alongside the spendthrift south, will resist attempts by the wealthier nations – Germany, France, the Netherlands and the Nordics – to rebalance contributions between donor and recipient nations to make up the shortfall from the UK's contribution. Such defiance will prove popular domestically.

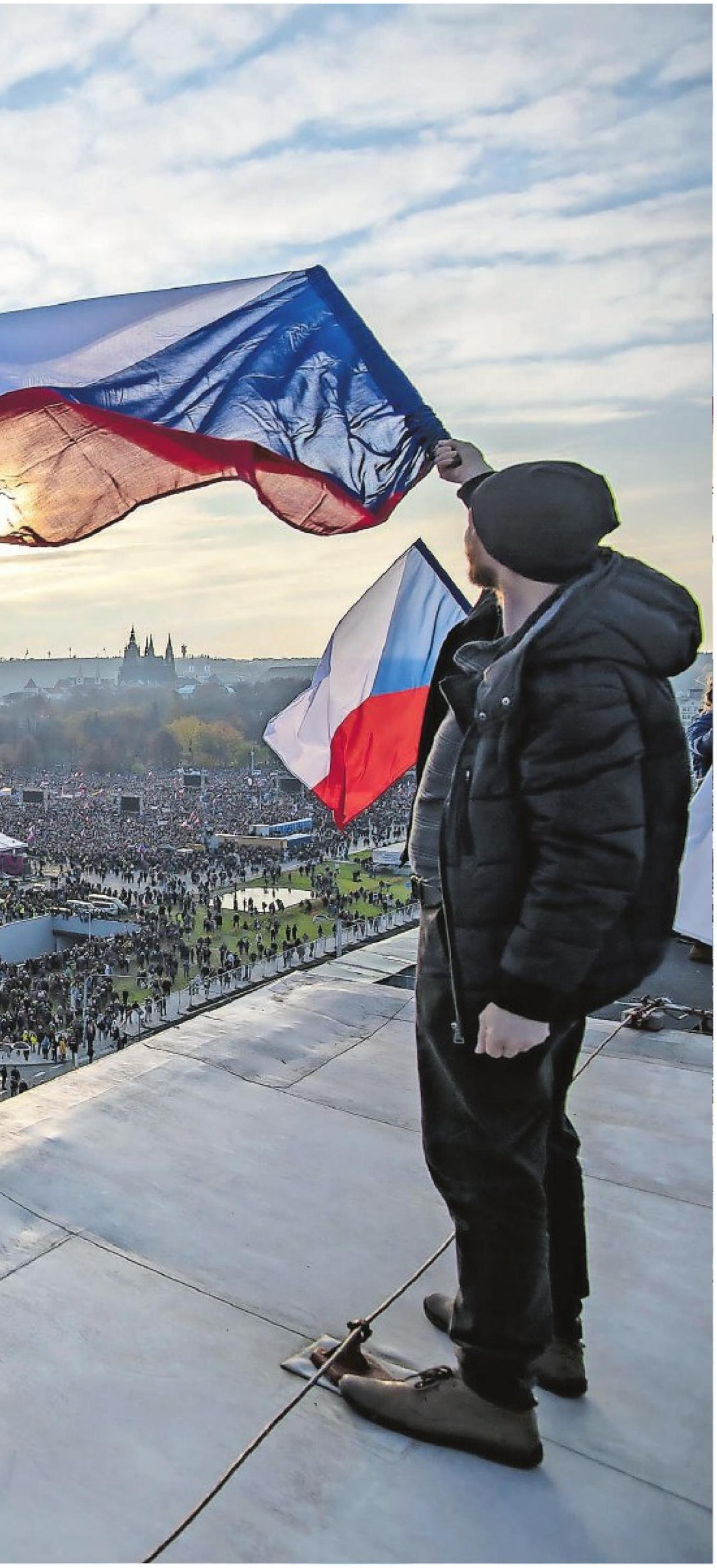
Yet the first signs are emerging of a liberal fightback, seeking to rekindle and harness enthusiasm for the European ideals of free movement and liberalism. It is being led by the leaderships of the capital cities. Last October, Gergely Karácsony, whose campaign had a distinctly green and multi-cultural message, won mayoral elections in Budapest, defeating the candidate backed by Orban and his huge state media machine.

Karacsony's success was replicated elsewhere. Candidates endorsed by an alliance of opposition parties triumphed in 14 of Budapest's 23 districts – a stunning reversal of the previous result in 2014. A similar pattern was evident in the provinces, particularly in the larger towns.

In December, the mayors of Budapest,

LIBERAL FIGHTBACK: Tens of thousands of protesters attend a protest in Prague against the goverment of Prime Minister Andrej Babis the day before the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution.

Photo: Getty Images



Warsaw, Prague and Bratislava joined forces to form a 'Pact of Free Cities'. Their joint statement promised to promote the "common values of freedom, human dignity, democracy, equality, rule of law, social justice, tolerance and cultural diversity".

The signing event was held at the symbolic venue of George Soros's Central European University in Budapest, which has been forced by Orbán's government to move much of its operations to Vienna.

The three mayors reminded their voters: "The resilience and courage of self-organising communities resulted in the collapse of the Berlin Wall three decades ago. The shipbuilders and steelworkers of the Polish Solidarity movement of 1980, the freedom fighters on the streets of Budapest in 1956, and of Prague and Bratislava in 1968, ultimately triumphed." The ideological battle is over the future direction of these countries, but also over the interpretation of the past. Was the fight against communism to give countries self-determination, as defined in a narrow nationalist way? Or was it to embrace a common European home?

There are signs that the mayoral alliance is beginning to unnerve the authoritarian central governments. Hungary's ruling coalition approved legislation a few weeks ago restricting the power of municipalities in parliament. As a result, the municipalities are appealing to Brussels to allocate funds directly to their municipal budgets.

No matter which way the Central Europeans turn politically in coming years – and any optimism should be guarded – geo-strategically they will play an ever more dominant role in the EU.

FREE CITIES: (left to right) Mayors Zdenek Hrib of Prague, Gergely Karácsony of Budapest, Matus Vallo of Bratislava and Rafal Trzaskowski of Warsaw

Below; President of Slovakia, Zuzana Caputova
Photos: Getty Images

VISEGRAD GROUP

The states of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia together form the Visegrad Group – also known as the Visegrad Four or V4 – which was established to advance their military, cultural, economic and energy co-operation, as well as their combined integration in the EU.
The group takes its name from the town of Visegrad, in northern Hungary, where the leaders of that country, Poland and Czechoslovakia met in 1991.
The site was chosen for the summit as an intentional allusion to the medieval Congress of Visegrad in 1335 between John I of Bohemia, Charles I of Hungary and Casimir III of Poland.
All four members of the Visegrad Group joined the EU in 2004.

While Germany and France were always the motor, and will remain so, there was always place for a third country on major international issues.

That role was played by the UK. Now Poland is vying for that slot. During the Ukrainian revolution of 2014, Germany, France and Poland drove the negotiations, a troika that was seen as a prototype for a future arrangement.

That is why Macron is making a beeline for a country and a region in which he had previously shown little interest or affinity. That is why he, Angela Merkel and whoever succeeds her as German chancellor are likely to temper their criticism of infringements on liberal norms in these countries. That is why Johnson and his crowd will be even more pleased with their handiwork.

EXPERTISE

A SEPARATE STORY

SOUVERAINETÉ
NOTRE VRAI PAYS, c'est le QUÉBEC

NICK HOPKINSON recounts the long campaign by the separatist movement in his native Québec and finds striking parallels with the UK's departure from the EU

There are many similarities between our Brexit psycho-drama and the Parti Québécois' attempts to leave Canada in the 1980s and 1990s. The Québec experience can provide some insights into how the Brexit process may unfold in the United Kingdom, and perhaps even some hope for those of us who wish to rejoin the European Union.

As an "Anglophone" who grew up in Montreal against a background of nationalism and referendums, Brexit is largely a *déjà vu* nightmare. There are, of course, significant differences. The campaign for Brexit has succeeded, while that for Québec separatism has receded. Another is the level of violence involved. From 1963 to 1970, Québec's mini version of the Troubles culminated in the British trade commissioner, James Cross, and the provincial vice premier, Pierre Laporte, being kidnapped. Cross was eventually released, but Laporte was murdered. During that time, I recall bombs blowing out windows of my school and it then being guarded by the Canadian army.

As I grew in political awareness, I eventually came to regard the then European Community as an effective way for different nations and peoples to coexist prosperously in peace. With little future for Anglophones in Québec, my journey took me from Montreal to working eventually for the British government, which was at the time the champion of EU enlargement.

Québec and Brexit experiences have given me a deep dislike of nationalist populist elites who offer false hope to the less content and 'left behind', who will be less well-off as a result of what they advocate. Such leaders offer hope but their politics divide. They raise and magnify often dormant tensions, and create new ones that did not exist before. Their populist nationalism discriminates against minorities, erodes individual rights and undermines democracy.

Both Québec separatists and Brexiters exaggerated the threat to national identity, culture and language to validate their political ambitions. Québec nationalism was in part stoked by fears that Francophone identity and language were being swamped by English dominance of North American culture and the media.

Advocates played up the threat from non-English immigrants (Allophones) gravitating towards the Anglophone community. Some even argued the only genuine Québécois were Francophones. Slogans surfaced such as "*le Québec aux Québécois*". "*Maîtres chez nous*" (masters in our own home) – messages that are not too dissimilar from "take back control". Non-Francophone youth, even if bilingual and born in Québec, experienced their own "hostile environment".

Both Québec separatism and Brexit also portrayed themselves as anti-establishment movements. The elite were portrayed as Anglophones, often living in the affluent Montreal suburb of Westmount, conveniently forgetting many Anglophones were working class people living in Point St Charles or middle class, living in Montreal's West Island. The UK's so-called "Remain elite" was similarly drawn from all classes.

Separatists conveniently forgot their populist leaders were an alternative elite in waiting, a number of whom were privately-educated and grew up in affluent Outremont. Similarly, Brexit elite leaders are not strangers to Eton and Dulwich College.

Another parallel is the way nationalist politicians blamed their own failings on

QUÉBECERS' QUEST

1960

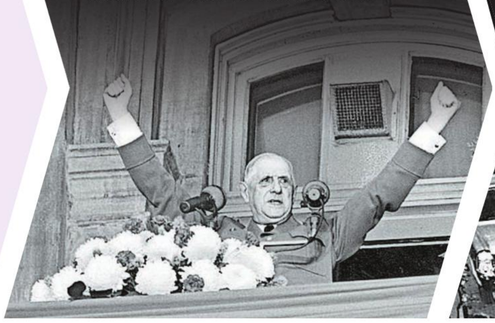
The decade sees a period of social and economic progression, known as La Revolution Tranquille (the Quiet Revolution), and a surge in Québec nationalism

1963

Marxist militant group Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) is founded and carries out its first bombings, claiming its first death

1967

Canada marks its centenary, with much debate about the status of Québec. On a visit to Montreal, French president declares: "Vive le Québec libre"



1968

Parti Québécois is founded as a sovereignist and social-democratic political party; Pierre Trudeau – a native of Montreal who once supported independence before opposing it – becomes Canada's PM. Riots take place when he visits the city

SOUVERAINETÉ
NOTRE VRAI PAYS c'est le QUÉBEC
MAINTENANT

HIGH HOPES: Pro-independence Quebeckers march in 1990
Photo: Getty Images

others – whether the EU or the Canadian federal government – and pretend "independence" is the solution.

In 1964, prime minister-to-be (and father of the current Canadian PM) Pierre Trudeau and six others wrote in their *Canadian Manifesto*: "To use nationalism as a yardstick for deciding policies and priorities is both sterile and retrograde. Overflowing nationalism distorts one's vision of reality, prevents one from seeing problems in their true perspective, falsifies solutions and constitutes a classic diversionary tactic for politicians caught by facts... separatism in Québec appears to us not only a waste of time but a step backwards... to take (Canada) apart would require an enormous expenditure of energy and gain no proven advantage."

Both separatists and Brexiters made the fundamental mistake, whether deliberately or not, of promoting the idea that cutting external links increases "effective" sovereignty. Separatists essentially argued they would be more sovereign without seats in Canadian institutions, whether in the Ottawa parliament or Bank of Canada. Many separatists believed an independent Québec could have its cake and eat it too.

Robert Bourassa, Québec premier during separate spells in the 1970s and 1980s, observed "there are maybe 60% who support "sovereignty association" (a softer form of independence giving Québec the exclusive power to determine its own laws, levy its taxes and establish relations abroad), but three quarters of them want to continue sending politicians to Ottawa".

Yvon Deschamps, the Québécois comedian, observed "what Québecers want is an independent Québec within a strong and united Canada". Our own Brexit comedians have also at times seemed to think an "independent" UK can have all the benefits of EU membership.

If Québec had separated from Canada, it risked losing access to a North American market 40 times larger than its own, which it enjoyed under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Brexiters are not only jettisoning an EU market eight times larger than ours, but also a deeper trade arrangement and EU trade agreements with another 60 countries, including Japan and Canada.

Gordon Ritchie, a senior Canadian diplomat, noted that if the US had to negotiate with an independent Québec, it would raise Québec's high level of state intervention in key sectors, factors which were less prominent in the NAFTA negotiations. Bill Merkin, a senior US official, stated "if there were a messy situation in Canada… that would make it very difficult for the US to enter into any kind of relationship with Québec. The US is going to be concerned about maintaining good relations with Canada". Similarly, our international trading partners (even the US) will prioritise trade agreements with the (larger) EU before they conclude anything meaningful with us.

The first referendum on whether Québec should pursue a path towards sovereignty was held in 1980. It saw 60% of Québecers vote against the move. Following this, Anglophone and Allophone populations were steadily reduced by legislation curbing access to English speaking schools and the outlawing of English as an official working language in "Bill 101". The number of students in English schools in 1976 more than halved from 236,000 to under 100,000 in 1990. By the time of a second referendum, in 1995, many non-Francophones had left, so there was a smaller support base for staying in Canada: 9% more voted for a harder version of independence, although 51% overall voted to stay in Canada. The situation is not quite analogous, but it is worth noting that in the 2016 EU referendum, most of the three million EU27 citizens were barred from voting (in line with general election rules), even though they pay taxes and would be most affected by Brexit.

Separation takes longer than promised as the power of the larger entity becomes apparent: In last month's election, the Conservatives pedalled the new myth that a vote for them would "Get Brexit Done". It won't. In the course of Canada's constitutional crisis in the 1990s, prime minister Jean Chrétien acknowledged "it would be irresponsible to believe that an agreement between an independent Québec and the rest of Canada could be concluded easily and quickly. It would take years to achieve and resolve".

The larger negotiating partner holds almost all the cards and the *demandeur*, the smaller separating entity, doesn't. Professor Leon Dion argued: "English Canada will not make concessions." We similarly cannot expect any generosity from the EU27.

Another parallel is the way that separation threatens national unity. Pierre Trudeau said "if Canada is divisible, Quebec should be divisible too". The northern two thirds of Québec was granted by the federal government to the

1969
Canada becomes officially bilingual as part of an attempt by Trudeau to stem the rise of separatism

1970 THE 'OCTOBER CRISIS'
FLQ militants kidnap a British diplomat, James Cross, Québec's deputy premier, Pierre Laporte. Trudeau enforces the emergency laws of the War Measures Act in Québec. Cross is released, with the kidnappers allowed to take asylum in Cuba, while Laporte is killed. The crisis marks a turning point away from violence in pursuit of independence and the FLQ declines. In its campaign, since 1963, it had killed eight people

Parti Québécois
On a be
Y'un vrai gouverneme
CFMB

1976
Québec elects its first separatist government under the Parti Québécois

1977
Bill 101 requires Québecers to speak French at work and send their children to French schools. All communications and commercials have to be in French too

province of Québec as an administrative convenience in the Québec Boundary Extension Acts of 1898 and 1912. This effectively tripled the size of Québec beyond the original French colony straddling the St Lawrence river.

The First Nations, the main inhabitants of northern Québec, firmly resisted joining any independent Québec. In 1991, Ovide Mercredi, then leader of the Assembly of First Nations, stated "if Québec separates... the aboriginal people will stay with Canada. They should not be forced to be part of a new state that they have not consented to".

Anglophones who formed a majority in Montreal's West Island also sought to remain part of Canada. With a hard Brexit certain, pressures are growing for an Irish border poll on unification and a second referendum on Scottish independence.

Separation also means businesses leaving and GDP declining. If politicians pursue policies which harm business, they downscale, and sometimes relocate. Economic growth falls as a result. Although its economy has grown, Québec since 1976 has been one of Canada's slowest growing provinces. While the uncertainty of separation is not the only reason, it is an important factor relegating Montreal from Canada's to Québec's business capital.

The day the separatist Parti Québécois came to power in November 1976, Sun Life, the major insurer, which occupied the one-time largest commercial building in the British Empire, announced it was moving its headquarters and most of its staff to Toronto.

Pharmaceutical company Ingersoll Rand invested $30 million in a new facility in Ontario instead of Québec, citing "the use of English (as being) very important to be competitive". Foreign investors became less interested in a Québec that no longer allowed firms to operate in North America's *lingua franca*. Analogously, leaving the (single) EU market will lose investment and jobs in the UK.

As opportunities and growth decline, and rights are weakened, people leave. Justice Jules Dechênes noted Bill 101 "demonstrates a totalitarian concept of society ... which put the collectivity above the rights of the individual".

An estimated one million Anglophones and Allophones have left Québec since 1976, many highly educated. This large population movement was barely noticed internationally as Québecers were easily absorbed elsewhere, largely in the growing Ontario economy. There were no images of mass hardship, but for many the personal hurt of relocating endures.

Meanwhile in the UK, net inflow of EU27 citizens is falling rapidly even though the need for immigration in our ageing country grows (not least filling 100,000 healthcare professional vacancies).

Those who advocate and support populist nationalism spare little thought for the human consequences of their politics for others. With little future in Québec, I left. Today, thanks in part to the impact of Brexit, my children are thinking of leaving the UK.

Although still on balance good places to live as seen within a global context, Québec and the UK have become less desirable. Some may believe separatism and Brexit can restore national identity and pride, but the reality is that populist nationalist movements consistently fail to fulfil their promises and render their countries less dynamic and globally attractive and admired.

Although the 1995 referendum was lost by the narrowest of margins, it was the second successive rejection of independence. Québec premier Jacques Parizeau resigned and his successor, Lucien Bouchard, promised a third referendum if the Parti Québécois won the next provincial election. Bouchard won the election but never pressed ahead with the referendum, arguably out of fear he might not win it.

FALSE DAWN: Parti Québecois supporters celebrate their victory in 1976

Photos: Getty Images

Three key developments may have contributed. The federal government recognised any new constitutional negotiations would fan the flames of separatism so it unilaterally recognised Québec as a "distinct society", thus taking much of the wind out of separatist sails. Secondly, the growing immigrant population in Québec was less interested in a risky separation. Lastly, both the Québec government and people recognised the economy should take priority. The separatist movement ever since has been split over tactics and strategy.

Fortunately, then, Québec has yet to leave Canada, and there is still some hope that Britain can build a close relationship with the EU. For the first time in 50 years, leaving Canada was not a major issue in the 2018 Québec provincial election. Since the 1995 referendum, a younger generation of Québecers, more confident in their place within Canada and more concerned with jobs and improving public services, opted for pragmatism over ideology.

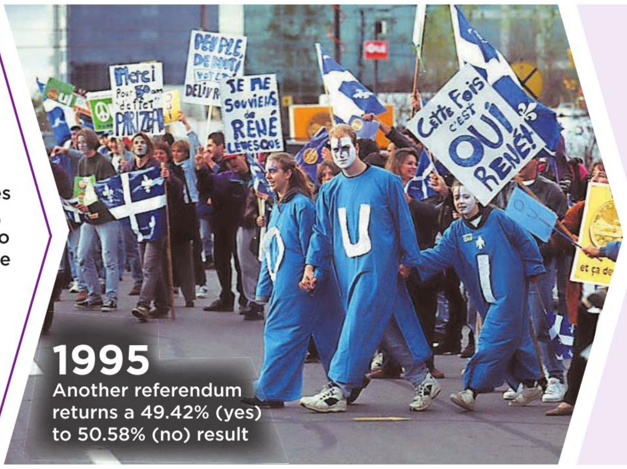
A 2018 IPSOS poll found only 19% in Québec's 18-25 age range described themselves as "separatists". A declining minority of older nationalists still of course cling to the past. But most in today's Québec, like British youth, want to be part of the world, rather than sideline themselves from it.

Like Québecers, there is every chance that a majority in the UK will also eventually reverse this national populist madness.

■ Nick Hopkinson is a former director of Wilton Park, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office policy forum, and has written a book on parliamentary democracy and several policy briefs. He posts regularly on Twitter @nickhopkinsonEU.

1980
A referendum on whether Québec should pursue a path toward sovereignty sees the region split 40.44% (yes) to 59.56% (no)

1982
The British parliament passes the Canada Act, meaning it will no longer have a role in the country's constitutional affairs


Merci Pour 50 ans d'effet PARIZEAU
PEUPLE, DEBOUT! VOTEZ DELIVR
SE ME Souviens de RENÉ LEVESQUE
Cette Fois c'est OUI RENÉ!
O
U
I
et ça de

1995
Another referendum returns a 49.42% (yes) to 50.58% (no) result

2006
Prime minister Stephen Harper declares that Québec is a 'nation' within Canada

2018
Parti Québécois take only ten seats at the Quebec elections, its lowest number since the early 1970s. The election is won by the centre right, Québec nationalist Coalition Avenir Québec, whose leader has said it will never endorse a referendum on sovereignty

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EXPERTISE

WE ARE THE MEDIA

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Comedian, Musician, Writer

ALL TO BLAME: Caroline Flack Photo: Getty Images

I wasn't really that aware of Caroline Flack; I realise what a tiresomely bourgeois and pretentious-sounding thing that is to say right now, but it does become relevant, so bear with me.

I'd heard the name, of course, and I was aware of the fact that she was a TV presenter of sorts, operating primarily in a field of broadcasting which has never held any appeal to me (my aversion to the genre, indeed the whole concept of 'reality TV' is a subject for another time).

There were only two occasions I can think of – prior to the news of her death breaking at the weekend – on which she'd cropped up on my cultural radar. Firstly, I recall reading with a twinge of salacious glee, back at the height of One Direction's fame, that one of the young lads was enjoying a very public affair with a glamorous lady celebrity quite a few years his senior. The second time was just a few weeks ago, when she was arrested over allegations of assaulting her boyfriend.

In other words, she was someone I had almost no knowledge of and not that much interest in. But when those stories broke upon the Twittersphere, did I click on the links to read more? You bet I did.

And now she's gone, and alongside the expressions of shock and grief from friends, colleagues and fans, there's a wave of anger; anger that "they" have done it again, anger that our relentlessly prurient and intrusive "media" has claimed another victim.

"They" didn't do this; *we* did it. We all did it. And unless we realise that, we're going to do it again, and again. This is not in any way to absolve others.

A tale such as Flack's is a win/win for the tabloids: print scurrilous and condemnatory gossip-pieces and op-eds about someone until tragedy ensues, then get another burst of sales with handwringing sob stories about what a senseless waste it all is.

I was 27 when Princess Diana died; I remember being utterly bewildered at the mind-melting levels of hypocrisy shown in the days that followed, not only by the tabloid papers but by their own readership.

Right up until her death, the vigorously expressed consensus in the popular press was that she was a spoiled manipulative harpy, constantly whining for sympathy for her treatment by the establishment while publicly cavorting with her "dusky-skinned lover".

When the news broke from Paris that she had been killed, there were Sunday tabloids being bundled on to the news-stands at that very moment bearing headlines about how shameless her conduct was and how she was an embarrassment to the nation.

Then suddenly she was gone, and not only was there not a paper or person in the country with a bad word to say about her, there wasn't a paper or person in the country who'd ever had a bad word to say about her. She was the Queen of all our Hearts, the pure and saintly princess so cruelly snatched away from us.

I recall watching this bizarre national fugue-state take hold and thinking "Do you not all remember what you were saying literally two days ago? Am I going crazy?"

I wondered then and I wonder now if there wasn't a tinge of unconscious collective shame in the extraordinary outpouring of mourning that followed.

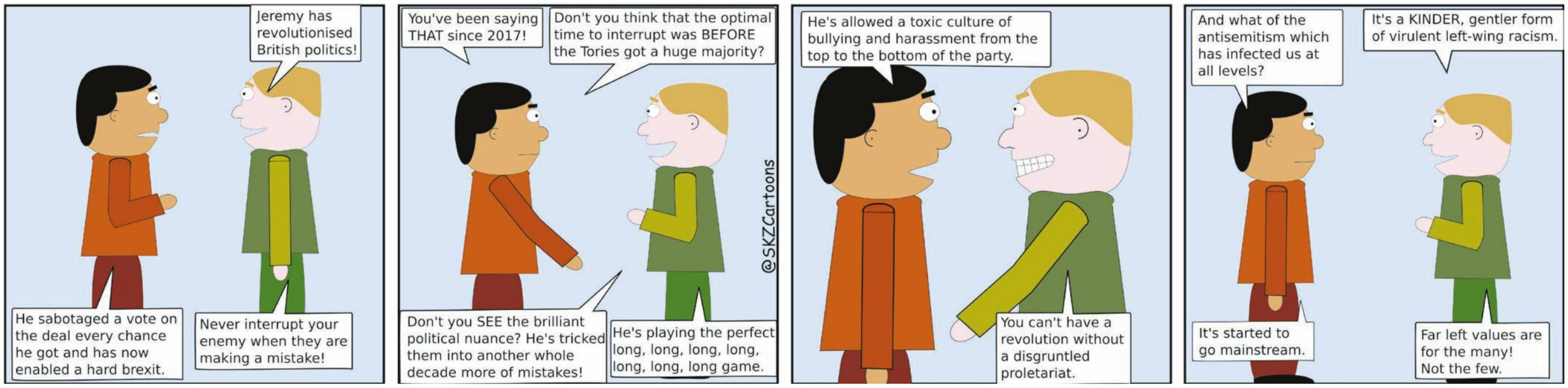
Because while "the media" (which has grown into a far bigger, more multi-headed beast since Diana's time) does indeed go after people with reckless abandon, it doesn't do so out of malice. It does so because it's profitable.

We can absolve ourselves as much as we like, but it's *our* sordid obsessions which the media seeks to satisfy. The tabloids 'monster' celebrities (and they do seem to especially love going after the pretty ones) because this sells newspapers.

Their websites – and the other non-print associated news sites – post saucy rumours and sneaky pap-shots of the fit and famous because it gets clicks, and clicks mean advertising revenue. We can stab the beast with our rhetorical steely knives for a while if it makes us feel better, but the beast survives because *we* keep feeding it. Even those of us who'd never dirty our hands on the *Sun*. If, like me, you've ever "clicked here to read more", you are a part, however microscopic, of the problem.

I don't know if I'm even suggesting a solution here: boycotts of tabloid newspapers have happened, and can be sustained, as my home town of Liverpool has shown. I guess I just wanted to say that if we really want to change our society then we have to begin by taking a long, hard look at ourselves.

And yes, that includes me. When the news of Flack's death broke, I posted something on Twitter to the effect that the second saddest thing about it was that we wouldn't learn from it; we'd blame everyone but ourselves and then go looking for our next victim. At the time of writing that tweet has had nearly sixteen thousand "likes". Because yes, I checked.



Jeremy has revolutionised British politics!
He sabotaged a vote on the deal every chance he got and has now enabled a hard brexit.
Never interrupt your enemy when they are making a mistake!
You've been saying THAT since 2017!
Don't you think that the optimal time to interrupt was BEFORE the Tories got a huge majority?
Don't you SEE the brilliant political nuance? He's tricked them into another whole decade more of mistakes!
He's playing the perfect long, long, long, long, long, long, long game.
@SKZCartoons
He's allowed a toxic culture of bullying and harassment from the top to the bottom of the party.
You can't have a revolution without a disgruntled proletariat.
And what of the antisemitism which has infected us at all levels?
It's a KINDER, gentler form of virulent left-wing racism.
It's started to go mainstream.
Far left values are for the many! Not the few.

PSYCHEDELIC MYTH: George MacKay as legendary outlaw Ned Kelly in *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2019)

THE CAPTIVATING KILLER

AS ANOTHER PORTRAYAL OF NED KELLY ARRIVES ON THE BIG SCREEN, RICHARD LUCK EXPLORES THE MURDEROUS LEGEND'S ENDURING APPEAL

One of the great myths about Australia is that it doesn't have any history. Having been populated for the better part of 50,000 years, the Great Southern Land actually has no end of history, much of it to be found in its rocks and in the oral tradition of its indigenous people.

If, however, you're someone who considers Australian history to have commenced with the arrival of Cook or with confederation, then you can see why certain people and particular incidents have assumed great importance.

So it is that Ned Kelly is championed as a hero – even a revolutionary – by some even while he's considered a thief and a murderer in the eyes of the law.

The personification of Aussie mateship and a fine example of Australia's love of the larrikin, Kelly enjoys a reputation Down Under somewhere between Robin Hood and Billy the Kid.

In the 140 years since his death, there have been plays about Kelly, poems, TV programmes, motion pictures and any number of novels. Of the latter, Peter Carey's Booker Prize-winning *True History of the Kelly Gang* has now been brought to the big screen by Justin Kurzel, the South Australian responsible for the superb true crime drama *Snowtown*, an ambitious staging of *Macbeth* and the – frankly shocking – *Assassin's Creed*.

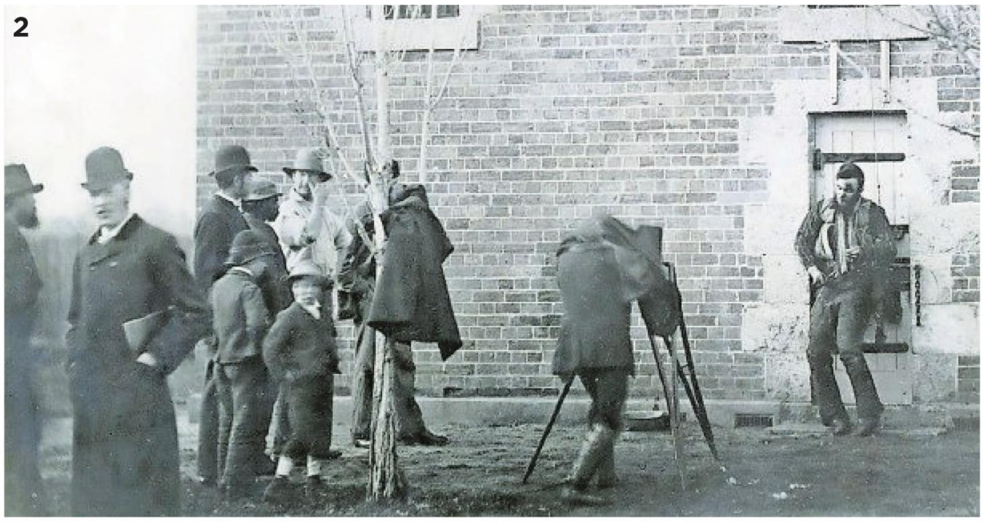
Starring *1917*'s George MacKay (himself the son of an Australian) as Ned, alongside Russell Crowe, Charlie Hunnam, Nicholas Hoult, Kurzel's actress wife Essie Davis – best known to international audiences for her to-the-edge performance in *The Babadook* – and Nick Cave's son Earl, *True History of the Kelly Gang* isn't overburdened with fact. Rather like Carey's novel, this is but an alternative take on the family legend, albeit one informed by alternative cultures and the Jerilderie Letter, a screed Kelly dictated to his lieutenant Joe Byrne, outlining his grievances against the forces of law and order. Peter Carey had the missive to hand whenever he was writing the novel, ensuring that his prose possessed the same poetry and eccentricity as Ned's.

While Kelly's unique grasp of the English language is on show in Kurzel's film, his *True History* flirts with surrealism, punk culture and pretty much any device that yanks Ned's story from the realm of history so it can be refashioned as psychedelic myth.

It's an ambitious approach and one that's upset fans of earlier, more faithful assaults on the story. Then again, since the tale of the Kelly family and their place in Australian history differs depending upon who you're asking, Kurzel has as much right to approach the tale from a new direction as the audience have to reject it.

Kurzel – currently shooting the Second World War drama *Ruin* with Margot Robbie – is by no means the first filmmaker to wrestle with the Clan Kelly. Since 1906's *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, upwards of 11 directors have taken a whack at the boy from Beveridge. Some have played the legend for laughs, others have taken it deadly seriously. That all have come up short (see "The Gang's (Almost) All Here") says less about their frailties as filmmakers than with the problems inherent in the Kelly myth – just how do you turn a cop killer into a symbol of independence and freedom?

AMBITIOUS: George MacKay and Essie Davis star in Justin Kurzel's *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2019)



The saga of Edward Kelly began in December 1854. Ned's father, John 'Red' Kelly had arrived in Australia clamped in irons – he was sent to Tasmania from Tipperary in 1841 after pinching a couple of pigs.

After relocating to Victoria, John married Eileen Quinn, sired eight children – Ned was the third eldest – served six months in jail and then died. As the oldest male in the Kelly household, huge responsibility was heaped upon the shoulders of the then-12-year-old Ned.

Given his old man's larrikin ways, it was little surprise that, in his efforts to make ends meet, the younger Kelly fell in with the infamous bushranger Harry Power. Less shocking still was the fact that, before he turned 20, Ned Kelly had served two jail terms, the first for assault, the second for stealing livestock.

A risky but remarkably profitable pastime, Ned took to thieving horses upon his return to civilian life.

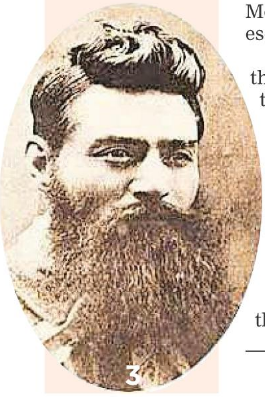
Since Harry Power was himself now behind bars – due to Kelly's treachery, the veteran outlaw believed – Ned ran with the Greta Mob, later to be known as the Kelly Gang. His partners-in-crime included his brother Dan, his best friend Joe Byrne and young Steve Hart. And since two of her boys were at the head of the firm, Ned's mother Eileen was also involved in the gang's activities.

Indeed, it's widely believe that it was Mrs Kelly who assaulted Constable Alexander Fitzpatrick after the policeman set out to arrest her lads in the spring of 1878. For striking an officer of the law, Eileen Kelly received a prison sentence which ensured that she'd never again see Ned alive.

STONE STAR:
1 Mick Jagger in *Ned Kelly* (1970)
Photo: Getty Images

2 The body of Kelly Gang member Joe Byrne is propped up against the wall of the Benalla Police Station
Photo: Wikipedia

3 Ned Kelly pictured before his execution
Photo: Wikipedia



It's what occurred in the wake of the Fitzpatrick incident that secured Ned Kelly's place in infamy. Determined not to return to jail, the gang rode off into the Wombat Ranges, pursued by nine policemen. At Stringybark Creek on October 26, 1878, the Kelly boys, together with Byrne and Hart, ambushed Constables Lonigan and McIntyre, murdering the former and threatening to kill the latter if he didn't reveal the location of his fellow officers. Upon encountering Constables Kennedy and Scanlan later the same day, the Kelly Gang shot and killed the two men. They might also have murdered Constable McIntyre had he not improvised his escape on horseback.

With the blood of police officers on their hands and McIntyre about to blow their cover, Kelly's mob now added robbing banks to their rap sheet. Besides holding up a branch of the National Bank in Euroa in December 1878, the gang crossed the border into New South Wales in the New Year where they'd pull off their most audacious stunt in the country town of Jerilderie.

Starting things off by laying siege to the local police station and taking two

▶ Turn to page 34

From page 33

constables hostage, the Kellys then paid a visit to the Royal Hotel to secure lodgings, after which they lifted upwards of £2,000 from the bank.

In return, Ned Kelly handed a bundle of papers to one of the clerks, Edward Living, and ordered him to deliver it to the *Jerilderie and Urana Gazette*.

This was the Jerilderie Letter, a 56-page, 7,500-word long treatise that charted Ned's descent into criminality, the blame for which he laid at the feet of Victoria's lawmen, whom he memorably describes as "a parcel of big, ugly, fat-necked, wombat-headed, big-bellied, magpie-legged, narrow-hipped, splaw-footed sons of Irish bailiffs or English landlords".

With his *crie de coeur*/massive whinge now in the hands of the nation's press, Ned Kelly made excellent use of his network of friends and associates, keeping under the radar while the reward for his capture rose to a staggering £8,000. Keen to claim both the money and Kelly's scalp, Captain Frederick Standish – in a move reminiscent of the men entrusted with bringing Butch and Sundance to book – took to touring the colonies in a special train, complete with armed officers and mounted policemen.

Speaking of the American West, Ned and Dan's sisters Kate and Margaret Kelly floated the idea of the gang fleeing to California. The boys also contemplated riding across country to ply their trade in Queensland.

In the end, everything came to a head in Glenrowan in June 1880. With Standish and his strike team bearing down on the small Victorian town, the Kelly boys proceeded to take most of its citizens hostage. Then, when the lawmen opened fire on their hotel hideout, Ned and Joe Byrne donned suits of armour.

The extraordinary sight of Ned Kelly walking into the police gunfire sporting a visor and breastplate while wielding his pistols in the sort of thing one might scoff at had a novelist concocted it.

However, there was to be no happy ending to the Kelly story. While Joe Byrne died from gunshot wounds and Dan Kelly and Steve Hart surrendered, Ned was shot in the one place he'd left unprotected, his legs. He was subsequently captured, tried, then executed. As he approached the noose on November 11, 1880, he spoke his last words: "Such is life."

It's only when revisiting Ned Kelly's story that you understand the ongoing fascination with the man and his myth – it's because the tale is so bloody exciting. Okay, so he was less a revolutionary and more a gun-wielding psychopath but that doesn't make his short, colourful life any the less compelling. It's rather like with Billy the Kid, a young man who packed a lot into a few short years without ever being the mixed-up teen portrayed by Paul Newman in *The Left-Handed Gun* or Kris Kristofferson's freedom-preaching balladeer in *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*. Incidentally, Rudy Wurlitzer's screenplay for that film originally contained a scene – based on fact – in which the Kid and his fellow Regulators ride into the town wearing dresses. It was an act of bravado that the Kelly Gang also embraced, and its recreation provides Justin Kurzel's movie with one of its most memorable moments.

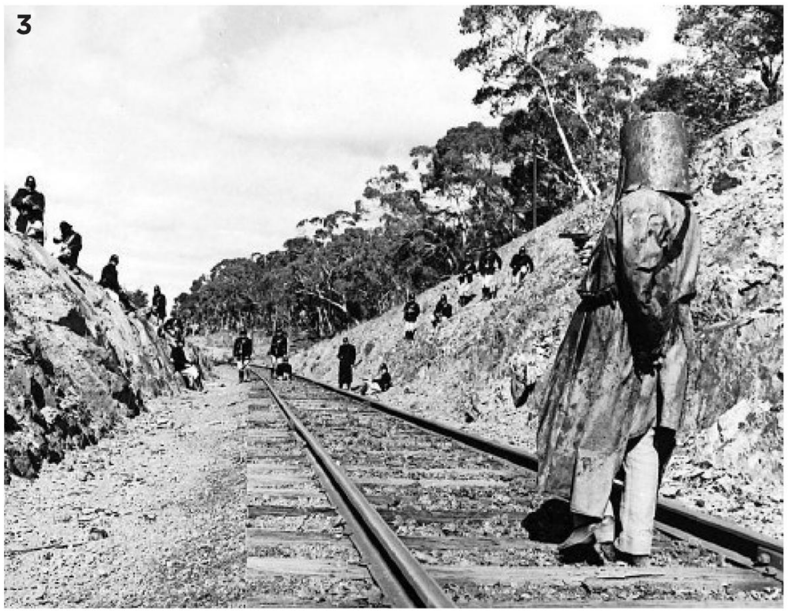
"Nothing scares a man like crazy," quips Earl Cave's Dan Kelly before the boys break open the dressing-up box. And while plenty of films eclipse *True History of the Kelly Gang*, even the crazy sing the praises of the ballad of Ned Kelly.

BIG NAMES:
1 Charlie Hunnam as Sergeant O'Neill in *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2019)

2 The movie stars Russell Crowe as Harry Power

3 Mick Jagger in the title role in *Ned Kelly* (1970)
Photo: Getty Images

4 From left, Heath Ledger, Philip Barantini, Orlando Bloom, and Laurence Kinlan in *Ned Kelly* (2003)
Photo: IMDB



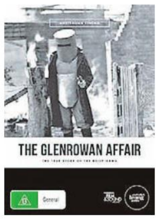
4

THE GANG'S (ALMOST) ALL HERE

NED KELLY'S MOST NOTEWORTHY MOVIE INCARNATIONS

THE STORY OF THE KELLY GANG
(By BIOGRAPH)
Specially taken by
Messrs JOHNSON & GIBSON, Melbourne.
An Entirely NEW and EXQUISITE Pictorial Representation of
The Thrilling Story of The KELLYS

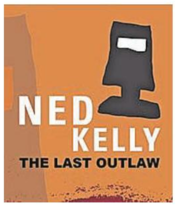
The History of the Kelly Gang (1906)
Amazingly, the world's first feature film was made, not in Hollywood, but in the suburbs of Melbourne. Tragically, much of the footage has been lost with the most recent restoration running to a mere 17 minutes.


THE GLENROWAN AFFAIR
General

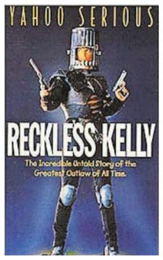
The Glenrowan Affair (1956)
Synonymous with the Carlton AFL Club, Bob Chitty wasn't the first athlete to swap the playing field for the world of film. And how good a Ned Kelly did he make? That Chitty never acted again tells you all you need to know.

MICK JAGGER
NED KELLY
TONY RICHARDSON
TECHNICOLOR

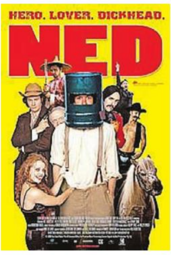
Ned Kelly (1970)
Oscar-winning director Tony Richardson and rock bad boy Mick Jagger might have looked like a winning combination, but this Ned is undone by a ho-hum turn from the Stones frontman, although he does belt out a decent rendition of *Wild Colonial Boy*.


NED KELLY
THE LAST OUTLAW

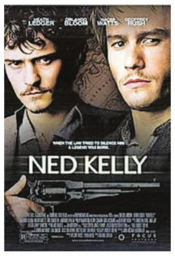
The Last Outlaw (1980)
This TV series sees John Jarratt (late of *Wolf Creek* and *Django Unchained*) essay the bushranger's bushranger. Would that director George Miller was the man behind *Mad Max* rather than the chap who shot *Les Patterson Saves the World*.


YAHOO SERIOUS
RECKLESS KELLY
The Incredible Untold Story of the Greatest Outlaw of All Time.

Reckless Kelly (1993)
After seeing off one scared cow with *Young Einstein*, Yahoo Serious takes on Australia's favourite son. So bad are the results, a law should be passed insisting Mr Serious only ever been referred to by his birth name, Greg Pead.


HERO. LOVER. DICKHEAD.
NED

Ned (2003)
A second Kelly comedy, *Ned* is so-so but everything that's good about it stems from writer-director-star Abe Forsythe. Only 22 when he made *Ned*, Forsythe's recent projects include the zom-com *Little Monsters* and the forthcoming *RoboCop Returns*.


LEDGER
BLOOM
NED KELLY

Ned Kelly (2003)
Directed by Gregor Jordan (Two Hands) and starring Heath Ledger as the legendary larrikin, this really should have worked. It's hard to say why it doesn't although the presence of Orlando Bloom as Joe Byrne is an unwelcome distraction.

ART EXHIBITIONISTS

CLAUDIA PRITCHARD on a stunning new show of paintings from a moment in history when the country and its rulers were at their most self-aggrandising

Upon the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, and faced with the task of restating its majesty, Charles II appointed a spin doctor. The Lord Chamberlain, a role taken by a succession of aristocrats, was in charge of the Household above Stairs, and it was he and his staff who staged the ceremonies and displays of extravagance that established the restored king's magnificence.

The visual arts were harnessed in this cause, no portrait too flattering, no decor too flamboyant, no personal ornament too lavish, no building too ambitious for this great personage. At home and abroad, Charles II – returned from exile on the continent – was to be beheld as wondrous.

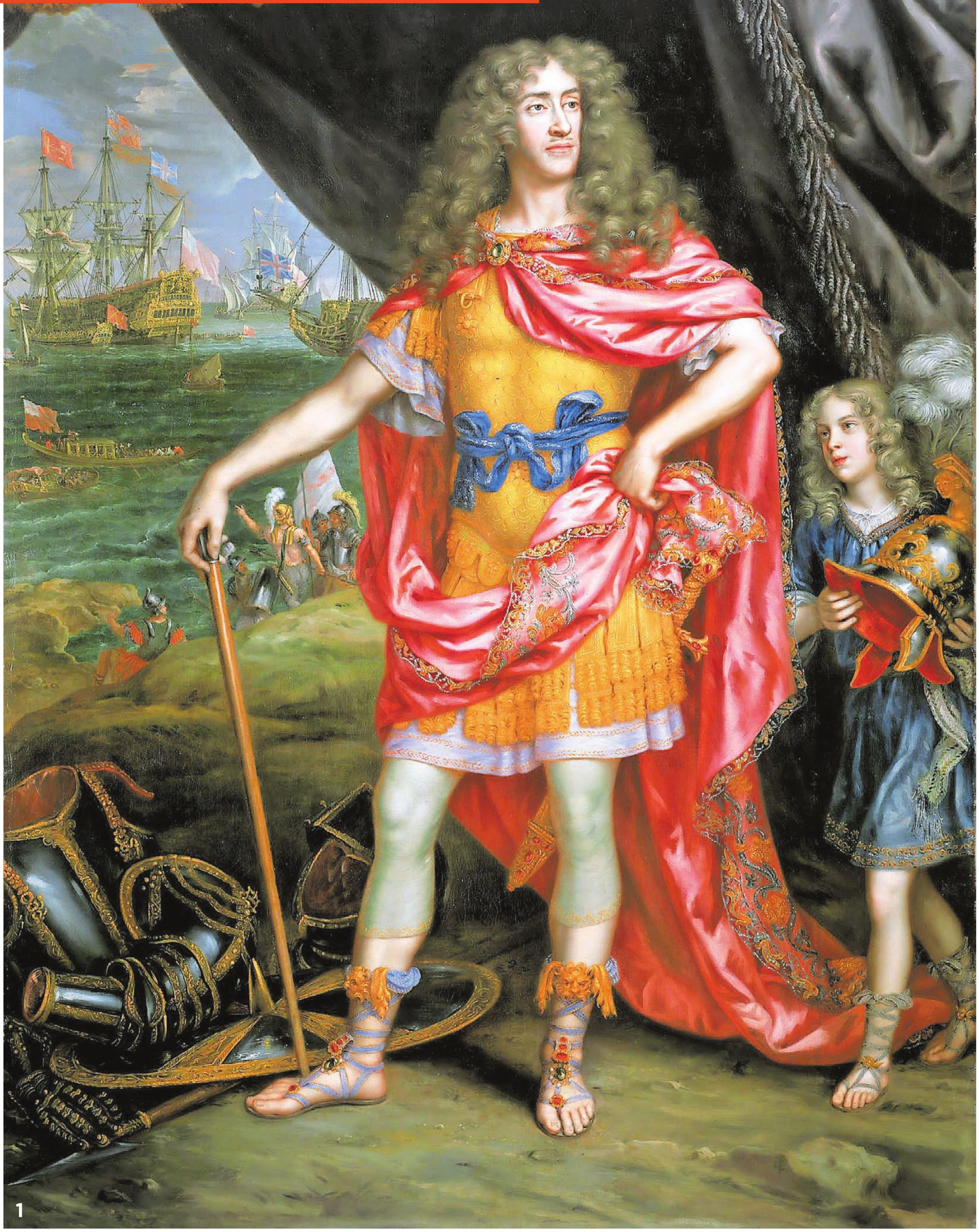
For painters, sculptors and architects,whose work and influence the king had encountered on the mainland of Europe, it was a bonanza. And for today's visitors to galleries and stately homes the almost comical exuberance of this explosion of excess prompts both admiration at the skill and amusement at this guileless display of self-aggrandisement.

A major show at Tate Britain examines the reign of Charles II and his immediate successors until the death of Anne in 1714, and looks in particular at the role of art in reinforcing power. In a striking parallel with today's political elite, in *British Baroque: Power and Illusion* much is made of the tendency of the rich and powerful to pretend to be something they are not.

Charles, above all is elevated to nothing short of a god. In a bedroom ceiling painting by John Michael Wright he is Astraea, sharing joint billing with the goddess of justice.

For the maritime extravaganza that is Neapolitan Antonio Verrio's *The Sea Triumph of Charles II* (c1674), he is a modern Neptune. In scaly armour, with glam rock curls and enthroned in a great shell, he is borne aloft by an eruption of horses, coronets, nymphs, and hangers-on, his mighty fleet in the background and angels at his luxuriantly coiffured head.

While an assortment of earls carried out the ceremonial duties as Lord Chamberlain, encouraging and enabling sumptuous ornamentation in private and official rooms, the king himself appointed the Dutch artist Peter Lely his official painter. In Lely's 1664 portrait of



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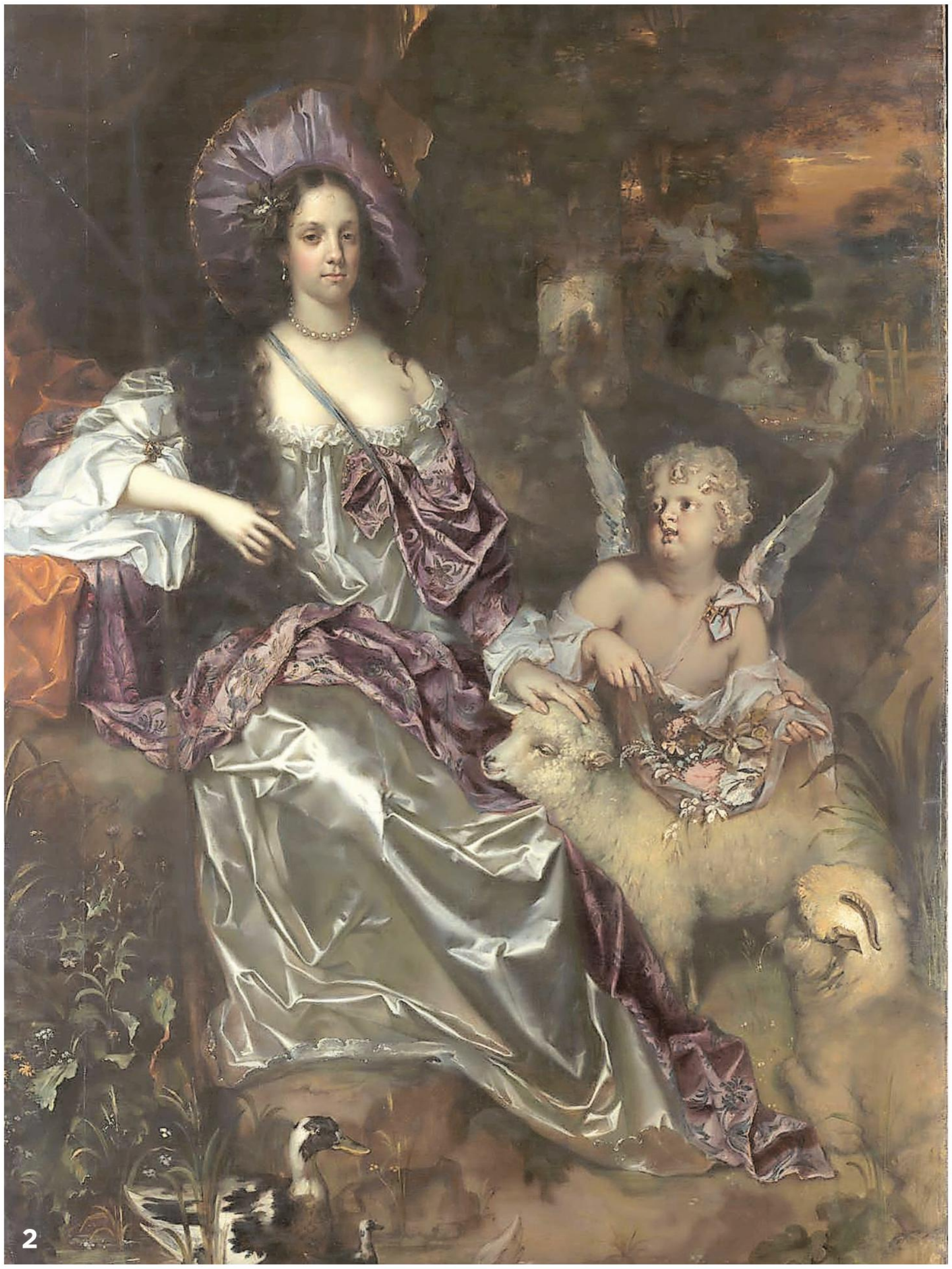

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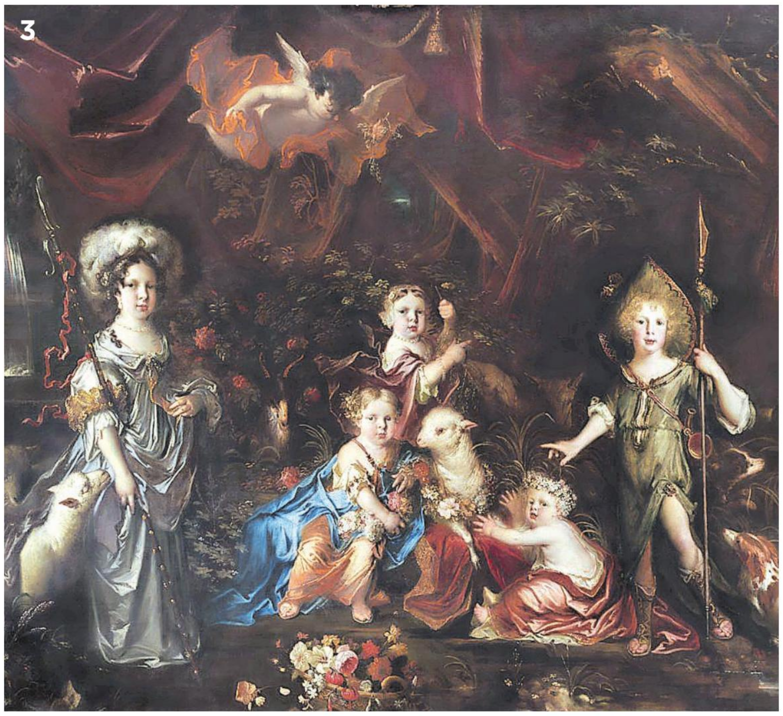

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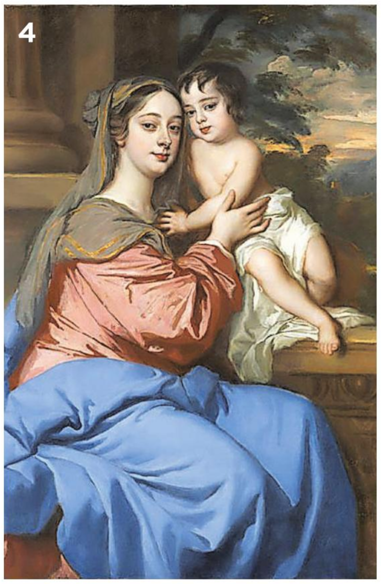

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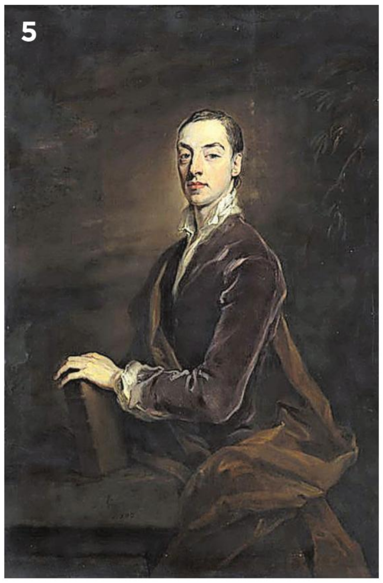

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the king's favourite mistress, Charles is God: Barbara Palmer, Duchess of Cleveland is portrayed as the Madonna, her son by her royal lover, as the infant Christ.

Charles's brother James, Duke of York, also liked to be rifle through the dressing-up box. Although he was another enthusiastic patron of Lely, he chose the French painter Henri Gascar to depict him as Mars, god of war (James was Lord High Admiral), armour at his sandalled feet, a helmet at the ready, battleships at sea.

While the menfolk were advertising their military and genetic supremacy, the women of the court favoured the pastoral look. Somewhat carelessly attired as shepherdesses, fondling their flock, or dangling their hands in water to signal purity, they appear in Arcadian landscapes that would, in their real lives become part of their hinterland, with ambitious upgradings of houses and gardens.

While Charles II held court at the Palace of Whitehall (lost to fire in 1698, bar Banqueting House), his Portuguese consort, Catherine of Braganza, kept her own household at Somerset House. For her own image consultant, she appointed the Catholic Flemish painter Jacob Huysmans.

Sitting for him, the queen semaphores docile benignity, creatures clustering around her unafraid, and piety, an angel in attendance. The piglet-faced children of Melbourne Hall, Derbyshire, are similarly attired as tiny warriors and shepherdesses, their adult roles assured.

This taste for artifice extended beyond the person to the interiors of the rapidly embellished houses and palaces. As Dutch artists with specialities poured into the country, there was an explosion of flower painting – every bloom in season at the same time – playfully virtuosic perspectival scenes and eye-tricking *trompe l'oeil*.

While there was an overlap with the genuine enquiry of scientists able to see microscopic detail better than ever, thanks to improved instruments, there was also fun to be had with the craze for optical illusions. The Dutch artist Samuel van Hoogstraten specialised in peepshows, the viewer peering in on teeny rooms in which furniture sprang into three dimensions. Van Hoogstraten straddled the arts and sciences, attending meetings and discussion dinners with members of the Royal Society (founded in 1662). One such in the Tate show saucily lets the spy see right through to the bedroom.

British-born artist Edward Collier, after training in Haarlem and working in Leiden, made a living from painting pinboards so lifelike that the viewer must look twice.

Perfecting certain curls of paper and 3D objects – a watch, comb, quill, sealing wax – he repeated these elements in constantly changing permutations.

But Jan van der Vaart's violin and bow hanging on a door (after 1674), and loaned to the show by Chatsworth House – only the brass hook is real – is an example of

Turn to page 38

PUFFED-UP:
1 *James Duke of York,* Henri Gascar

2 *Catherine of Braganza,* Jacob Huysmans

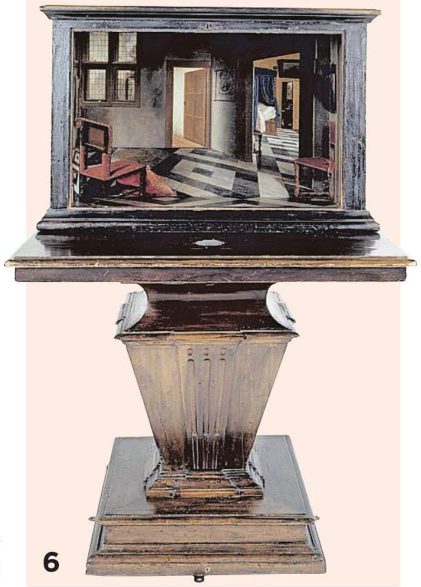
3 *The Coke Children,* Jacob Huysmans

4 *Duchess of Cleveland with her son*, Peter Lely

5 *Matthew Prior,* Godfrey Kneller

6 *Peepshow,* Samuel Van Hoogstraten

Pictures: Contributed



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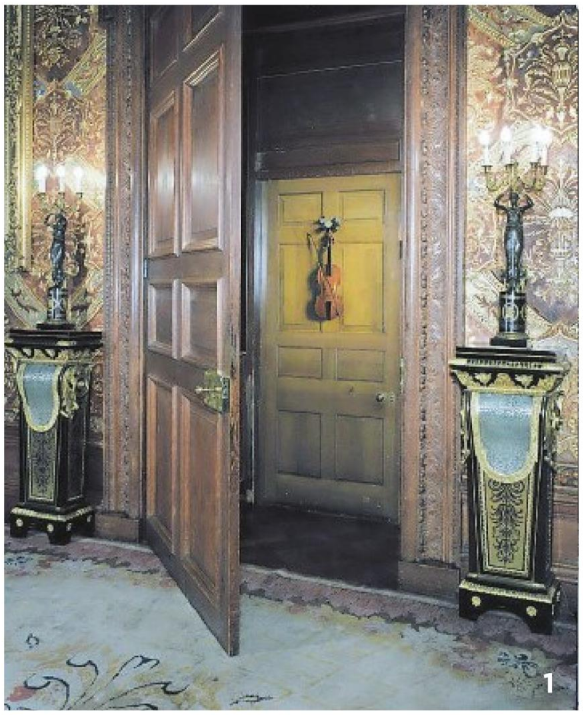
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From page 37

trompe-l'oeil painting that to this day amazes.

Even conventional portraits were not exempt from interference. At Petworth House, Swedish painter Michael Dahl's series of full-lengths of society women commissioned for the West Sussex mansion was considered an impediment by a later owner who in the 1820s installed Napoleonic war scenes below, cutting the so-called "Petworth Beauties" off at the knees.

It has since transpired that the legs were merely folded back, and now, for the first time in 200 years, these luxuriously swathed aristocrats tower once more.

Many of the works of art in this unashamed celebration of one particularly flamboyant period in Britain's long love affair with Baroque excess are drawn from public collections and visitable stately homes such as Petworth. But rarely can we see them, particularly those in private houses or at Natonal Trust or English Heritage properties, hung so well lit or so low. Without the need to peer up above a cumbersome commode or across a roped-off room, there is a rare chance here to see properly the works of European artists attracted to Britain by the prospect of work and admiration.

It was Anthony van Dyck, too early for the remit of this show, who raised the bar for painting in Britain under Charles I. The Debrett's Peerage in paint that followed owed much to him. But from one later portraitist, Godfrey Kneller, comes a sign of where art may go.

His psychologically forensic, loosely painted and arrestingly aesthetic portrait of poet and diplomat Matthew Prior seems, in the year 1700, to leap into the 19th century and beyond. It makes the Baroque, however excellent the craftsmanship, and the puffed-up personages that were in its grip, look vain, fatuous and overstuffed.

■ *British Baroque: Power and Illusion* runs at Tate Britain until April 19

INDULGENCE:
1 *Trompe l'oeil* of a violin and bow hanging on a door by Jan van der Vaar

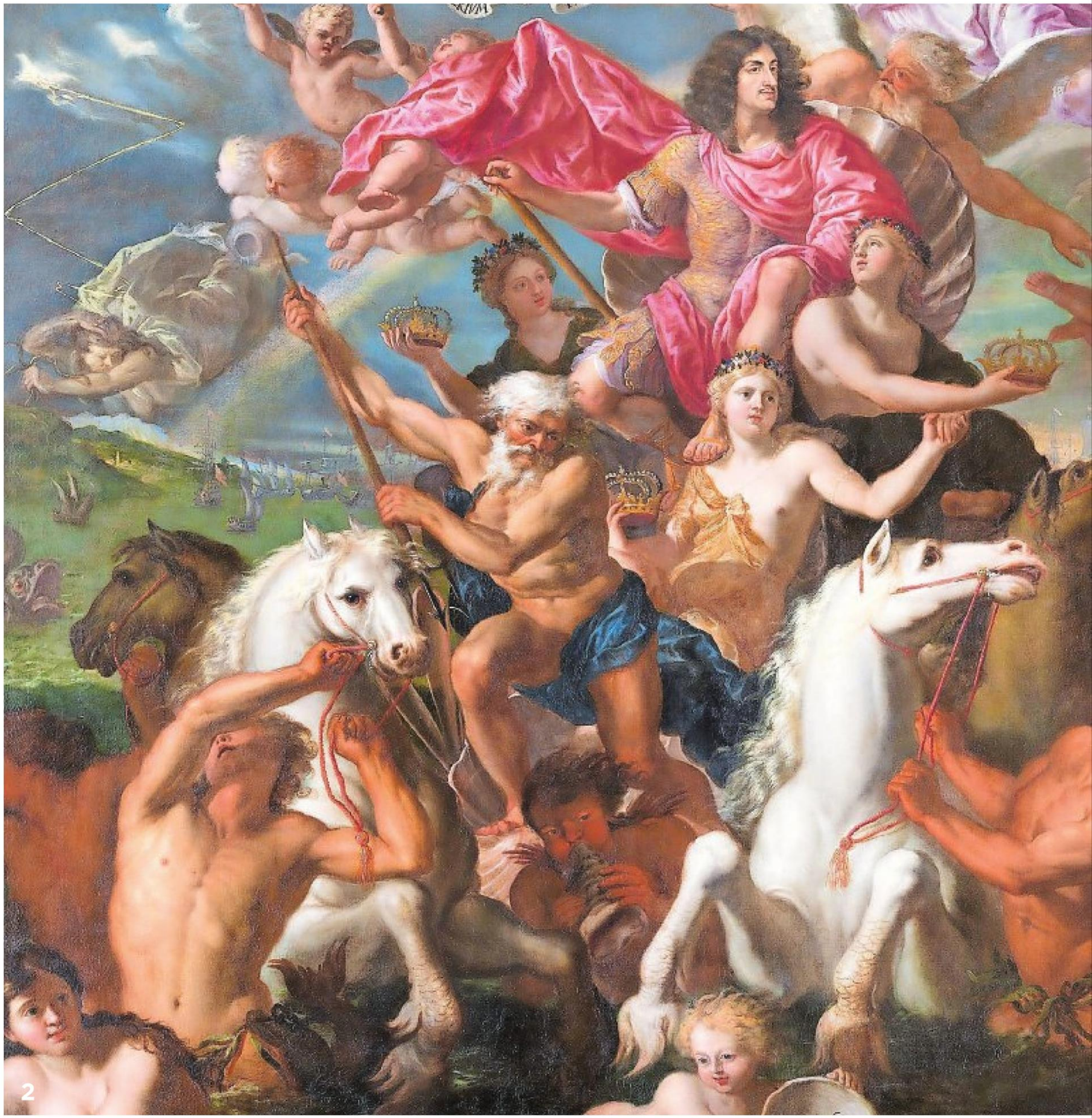
2 *The Sea Triumph of Charles II*, Antonio Verrio

3 *Self portrait*, Peter Lely

4 *Trompe l'oeil* of newspapers, letters and writing implements, by Edward Collier,

5 *Young Man Reading in a Courtyard*, Samuel Van Hoogstraten

Pictures: Contributed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PETER LELY

Born Pieter van der Faes, he is reputed to have adopted the surname Lely from a heraldic lily on the gable of the house where his father was born in the Hague.

He arrived in London in around 1643 and his early paintings in the country – mainly mythological or religious scenes, or portraits set in a pastoral landscape – show influences from Anthony van Dyck and the Dutch baroque.

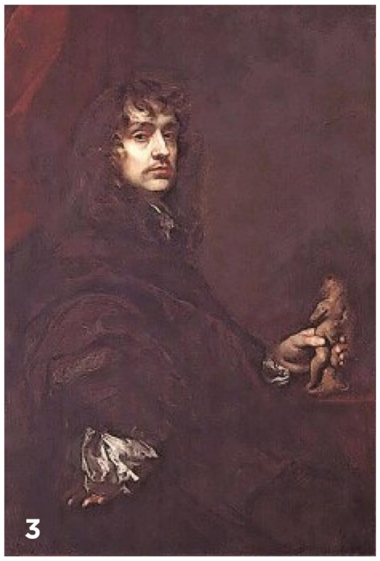
Lely's portraits were well received, and he succeeded van Dyck (who had died in 1641) as the most fashionable portrait artist in England.

He became a freeman of the Painter-Stainers' Company in 1647 and was portrait artist to Charles I. His talent ensured that his career was not interrupted by Charles's execution, and he served Oliver Cromwell, whom he painted "warts and all", and Richard Cromwell.

After the Restoration in 1660, Lely was appointed as Charles II's Principal Painter in Ordinary in 1661, with a stipend of £200 per year, as van Dyck had enjoyed in the previous Stuart reign.

Lely became a naturalised English subject in 1662. He ran a large and prolific workshop and after Lely had painted a sitter's head, his pupils would often complete the portrait, meaning he left an enormous amount of work, although some is of varying quality.

In 1680, he died at his easel, at his home in Covent Garden, while painting a portrait of the Duchess of Somerset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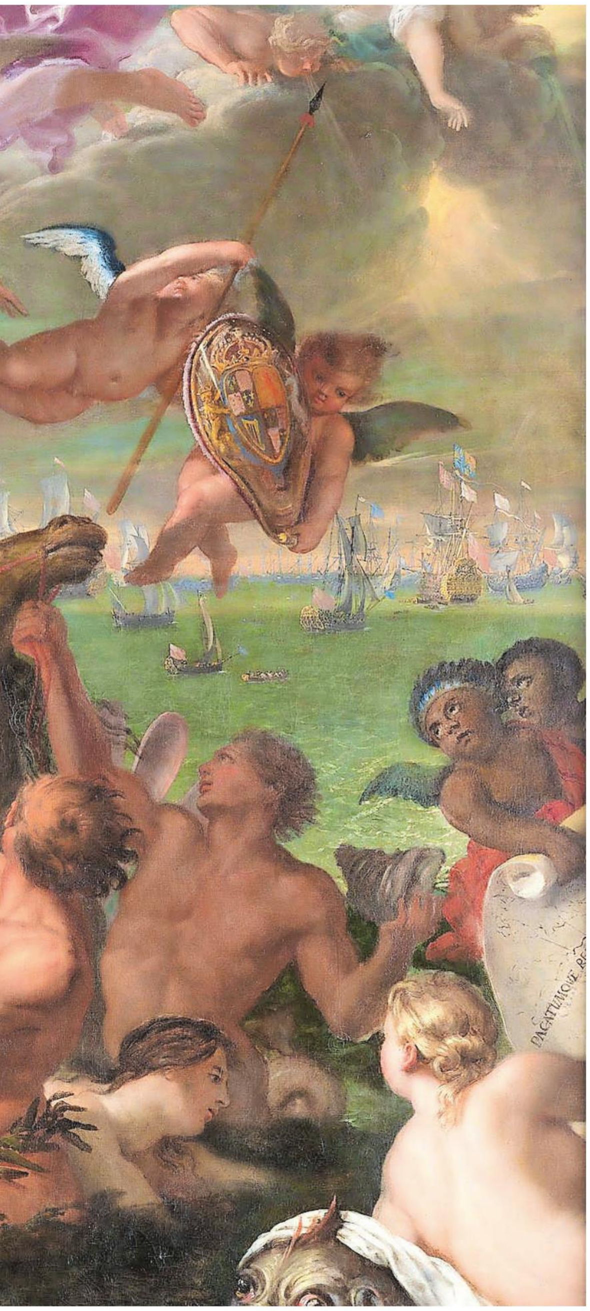

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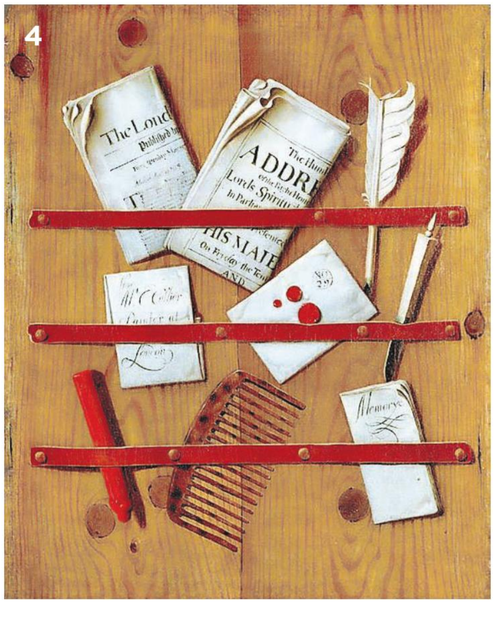
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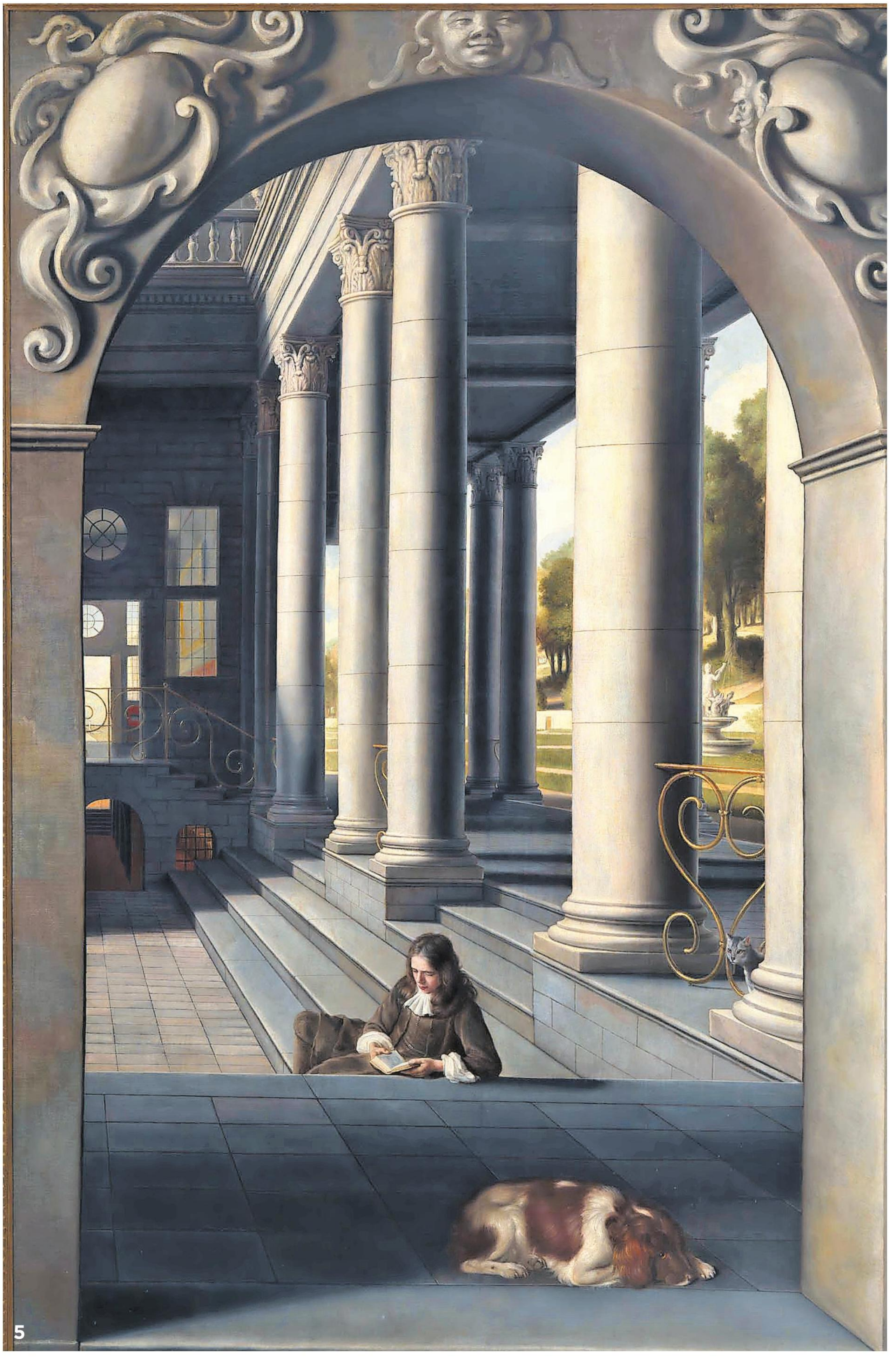


Detroit

A CITY IN MUSIC

THE TEMPTATIONS

MORE THAN MOTOWN

The immense contribution of its most famous record label has unfairly overshadowed the city's other musical heritage, says **SOPHIA DEBOICK**

Whole musical worlds have been made in Detroit, and they have always moved to the beat of the changing fortunes of a city where adversity has fed invention and creative dynamism could be dimmed but never snuffed out. Detroit became a boomtown in the first half of the 20th century after Henry Ford founded his motor company there in 1903, and the 'Motor City' rose in glittering Art Deco skyscrapers.

That it was the birthplace of the first commercial radio station, WWJ, in 1920 was a sign of its modernity. The Great Migration of the early 20th century changed the racial make-up of the city radically, as thousands of black Americans were among the southerners who flocked in looking for work, an exodus that ramped up as the city thrived as an arms manufacturing centre during the Second World War.

Detroit became a byword for racial tension into the mid-20th century, and the massive scale of discrimination in employment, education and housing came to a head in riots in 1943 and 1967. Detroit's black population made it a music city early on, from the Delta bluesmen who migrated there – including John Lee Hooker, whose ***The Motor City is Burning*** was a snapshot of the 1967 riots – to the jazz scene of the 1950s.

Fortune Records, run by the Jewish Brown family, put out records by Hooker as well as fostering local R&B, country, gospel and rockabilly acts, but it was a black family-run label that would make Detroit synonymous with music.

It was an unlikely start for a multi-million-dollar business. In 1959 Berry Gordy bought a two-flat house on uptown Detroit's West Grand Boulevard using an $800 loan and money he had made writing songs for Jackie Wilson. He converted the garage and the kitchen into a recording studio and control room, the upper floor into the family home, and stuck a shop window on the front with the legend "Hitsville USA" written above.

From here, Motown Records was launched, Gordy representing the aspirational black middle class as he took the assembly line approach he had seen during a brief stint working on the Ford factory floor and applied it to music with a vengeance.

Motown became the biggest black-owned business in America as, for over a decade that began with the label's first No. 1, The Marvelettes' *Please Mr Postman* (1961), Motown put black artists at the forefront of popular music.

Against the backdrop of Detroit as a northern centre of the civil rights struggle, Motown staged more than just a crossover from the 'race records' of the past to the pop charts, but rather a takeover of the mainstream, and if Gordy was accused of putting out a sanitised version of black culture, his achievement nonetheless remained very real.

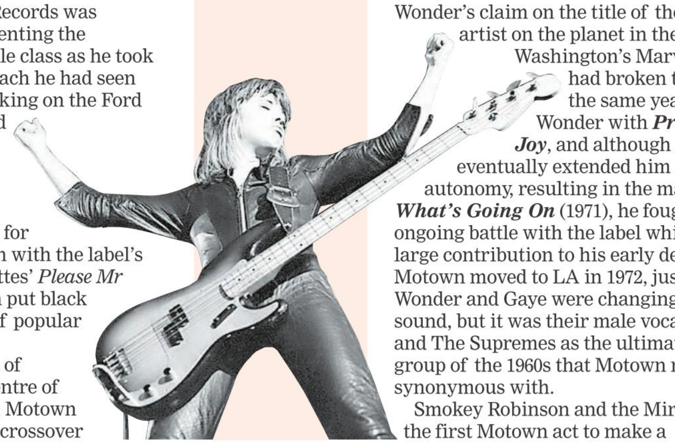
Scores of artists were signed by Motown, and more than a few became all-time musical legends. Stevie Wonder, from Saginaw, 90 miles north of Detroit, had his first No.1 single with ***Fingertips Pt. 2*** in 1963, aged just 12 years old, and went on to negotiate a contract that broke Gordy's rigid control of his artists (Gordy even had his immaculately turned-out stars drilled in 'deportment'). The 17-track double album ***Songs in the Key of Life*** (1976) would be the culmination of Wonder's claim on the title of the greatest artist on the planet in the 1970s.

Washington's Marvin Gaye had broken through in the same year as Wonder with ***Pride and Joy***, and although Motown eventually extended him some autonomy, resulting in the matchless ***What's Going On*** (1971), he fought an ongoing battle with the label which made a large contribution to his early demise. Motown moved to LA in 1972, just as Wonder and Gaye were changing their sound, but it was their male vocal groups and The Supremes as the ultimate girl group of the 1960s that Motown remained synonymous with.

Smokey Robinson and the Miracles were the first Motown act to make a breakthrough to the mainstream, with ***Shop Around*** (1960) Motown's first platinum-seller. The Temptations saw their second single, the Smokey Robinson-penned ***My Girl***, go to No.1 in 1964, the same year The Four Tops – led by Detroit-born Levi Stubbs – had a hit with their first single on the label, ***Baby I Need Your Loving***, following it two years later with the No.1 hit ***Reach Out I'll Be There***. Both songs were by Motown's crack writing and production team Holland-Dozier-Holland, who would also write ten of the 12 No.1s achieved by The Supremes.

Into the 1970s, The Spinners, known as the Detroit Spinners in the UK, had their first success with the Stevie Wonder produced and co-written ***It's A Shame*** (1970), while the Jackson 5's first four singles reached No.1 in 1969-1970. Between them, these acts had changed the course of popular music.

As Gordy put out single after single of exquisitely-crafted pop soul, the still stubbornly white rock world was having its first real outburst. Bassist turned frontman Rob Tyner and guitarists Fred 'Sonic' Smith and Wayne Kramer got together at a Detroit diner in 1964 to thrash out the name and philosophy of the band they were putting together. Plumping for 'Motor City 5' and anti-establishmentarianism, the MC5 would become the house band at the Grande Ballroom on Grand River Avenue, a few blocks over from the Motown headquarters. Following their signing to Elektra Records by renowned A&R man,



SOUNDS OF THE CITY: Smokey Robinson and The Miracles, circa 1965
Photo Getty Images

Below, Suzi Quatro in 1974
Photo: Ian Dickson/ Redferns

NOW LISTEN TO THE MUSIC...

Find the accompanying playlist on Spotify. Just search

NEW EUROPEAN: DETROIT

Featuring:

The Motor City is Burning
John Lee Hooker

Pride and Joy
Marvin Gaye

Kick Out the Jams
MC5

Good Life
Inner City

Danny Fields, the recordings of two of their many legendary appearances at the ballroom would make up their 1968 debut LP, ***Kick Out the Jams***.

Politically inflammatory and full of calls for revolution ("It's time to kick out the jams, motherf**kers!"), including a cover of Hooker's *The Motor City is Burning* which added incendiary references to "the pigs" and the Black Panthers, the MC5's debut was nonetheless outdone the following year by the other great garage band rising in Detroit at that time. The Stooges were also Ballroom residents and Elektra signees, and the band's eponymous debut, produced by John Cale, captured a bored disillusionment that was more chilling than the MC5's shouty rebellion. It utterly defied the hippie philosophy of the dawning of a new, youthful age of love and enlightenment, with Iggy Pop singing on the opener, ***1969***, that it was "Another year/ With nothing to do", baldly adding "Last year I was 21/ I didn't have a lot of fun".

The Stooges' first single, ***I Wanna Be Your Dog***, was as dirty a sound as had yet been committed to tape, with obscenely distorted guitars that were a proto-punk riposte to the earnest musicianship of Hendrix, Clapton, Page et al. Between these garage pioneers and the enduring if undervalued contributions to rock 'n' roll of arch Detroiters Alice Cooper – who created a whole new paradigm in 'shock rock' – and Suzi Quatro – who put a woman behind an instrument on the top of the European charts – Detroit's rock credentials are undeservedly overshadowed by its soul music history in the popular imagination.

The remainder of the 1970s saw the decline of the US motor industry in the face of multiple oil crises, bringing unemployment, depopulation, crime and urban decay to Detroit. It was in this city of profound decline that the techno scene rose in the 1980s. Derrick May, Juan Atkins and Kevin Saunderson were members of the black middle class from Belleville, Michigan, 25 miles west of Detroit. Taking on diverse influences, from the European pioneers of electronic music to Chicago house, they went on to make a sound that reflected post-industrial Detroit, imagining a different future while making it a partial reality.

The 'Belleville Three' began throwing exclusive dance parties in Detroit, but in May 1988 they opened the Music Institute club in a four-storey former shoe shop on Broadway. It would be the place where Detroit techno crystallised, and the three, along with figures including Jeff Mills – long-time resident DJ at nearby Ann Arbor's Necto club and co-founder of the techno collective Underground Resistance with 'Mad' Mike Banks and Robert Hood – made techno Detroit's great export after the motor trade had tanked. Its sound would be key to Britain's rave explosion, with May's ***Strings of Life*** (1987) and Saunderson's Inner City project's ***Good Life*** (1988) becoming dancefloor favourites.

More recently, Detroit's garage rock tradition has continued in a scene producing the likes of The White Stripes, and the city has become strongly associated with hip-hop. Eminem has made his gritty Detroit roots part of his personal mythology, while the city's urban deprivation has fed Insane Clown Posse's lyrical themes (they have also made the locally iconic fizzy drink Faygo part of their pantomimic schtick). But Downtown has now undergone a major regeneration, with life being breathed into many historic buildings and shiny, modern office blocks shooting up. Yet many of Detroit's communities are still being left behind and the adoption of parts of the city by an arty contingent taking advantage of cheap rents has brought accusations of gentrification. Like much of the western world, Detroit is a place where the gap between rich and poor is growing, but this city has proven that struggle feeds its art, and the effect of this latest phase of the city's history on the musical artists of the future remains to be seen.

A VISITOR'S VIEW

Detroit has been name-checked by outsiders in songs across genres. *Detroit City*, a homesick southern migrant worker's lament for the "cotton fields of home", was a hit for country stars Billy Grammer and Bobby Bare, as well as Tom Jones, in the 1960s. David Bowie's *Panic in Detroit* (1973) was a dystopian vision referencing the 1967 riots and the White Panther Party led by John Sinclair, MC5's one-time manager, written when the Ziggy Stardust tour visited the city. New Yorkers KISS proffered the typically subtle *Detroit Rock City* in 1976, while Gil Scott-Heron's *We Almost Lost Detroit* (1977) dealt with the near-meltdown of the city's nuclear reactor in 1966.

STAGE REVIEW BY TIM WALKER

SALUTING STRONG WOMEN

Nora: A Doll's House

Young Vic, until March 21

★★★☆☆

When Henrik Ibsen wrote *A Doll's House* in 1879, he recognised the fight for gender equality was never going to be a quick and easy win, but an endless and bloody war of attrition. His play proved to be a useful stick of dynamite for the cause, with its central character Nora audaciously questioning the traditional roles of a man and a woman in a marriage. It movingly showed, too, how the institution could all too easily become a form of captivity for the wife.

This was theatre at its very best and most radical and it caused uproar in conservative Norwegian society when it was first staged. I can well understand why it means so much to the feminist playwright Stef Smith, but I fear she's killed the thing she loves with her reimagining of the work as *Nora: A Doll's House*. She interweaves the stories of three Noras at significant points in the fight for equal rights and emphasises how it's an ongoing struggle: 1918, when women were allowed to vote; 1968, when the pill became widely used and abortion was legalised; and 2018, when the scale of the #MeToo movement became apparent.

It's all well and good to have a clever idea like that, but the trick is to make it work. Her play feels modish and contrived and has none of the dramatic tension – or sense of a journey – that made the original such an enduring classic. I've no doubt at all that Ibsen himself would have found it rather annoying, not least with its suggestion of a lesbian attraction between Nora and Christine (Amaka Okafor).

The three Noras are played with determined earnestness by Natalie Klamar, Okafor (doubling up in this role) and Anna Russell-Martin, and the male characters (with Anglicised names and suitably-adapted backstories) by Mark Arends, Luke Norris and Zephryn Taitte. The director Elizabeth Freestone gives it everything she's got, but, for all the efforts and best intentions of everyone involved, it's still very heavy-going.

Still, let's always accentuate the positive: Tom Piper's angular set, consisting of three doorways – presumably evoking the door Nora slammed shut in the original – is impressive.

■ Frances Barber comes from a breed of larger-than-life actresses that have included Coral Browne, Elaine Stritch and Eartha Kitt, all of them strong, opinionated women who have been as fascinating off-stage as on it. Their voices, as well as their instinctive ability to deliver lines to maximum effect, are another common denominator.

Barber is appearing in *Musik* at the Leicester Square Theatre until March 1 and the one-woman show serves as a wonderful showcase for her talents. The new Pet Shop Boys musical – written by Jonathan (*Beautiful Thing*) Harvey and directed by Josh Seymour – focuses on the life of Billie Trix, a character who began life in the boys' last collaboration, *Closer to Heaven*. Trix knew anyone who was anyone in the cultural world over the past 75 years: it's a simple premise that makes for a joyful cocktail of cabaret and salacious showbiz gossip.

CONTRIVED: (left to right) Amaka Okafor, Anna Russell-Martin, Luke Norris and Natalie Klamar in *Nora: A Doll's House*

Photo: Marc Brenner

THE SCANDAL SHAMING FRANCE'S LITERARY ESTABLISHMENT

An explosive new book represents a reckoning not just for one of the country's most prominent writers, but its long indulged intellectual establishment, says **CHARLIE CONNELLY**

Right now, somewhere in Liguria, an 83-year-old Frenchman is fretting. He's in a hotel room on the coast and has been there since leaving France in a hurry in November. He is alone. He dines alone, he walks alone. Influential friends have stopped answering his calls and texts. His walks along the seafront only make his isolation more marked, the couples and groups of friends that pass him don't even notice him as they pass.

It wasn't always like this. In the old days Gabriel Matzneff was the toast of the Parisian literati. He lunched with presidents, wrote columns for leading newspapers and barely a year went by without a new book of essays, fiction, poetry or *carnets noir*, his diaries that gave equal credence to his deepest thoughts and everyday admin tasks.

So ingrained in French culture was he, so dominant his literary presence, that for almost his entire career he could openly boast in his books and during his many television appearances of how much he enjoyed having sex with minors.

"To sleep with a child, it's a holy experience, a baptismal event, a sacred adventure," he wrote in *Les moins de seize ans* ('*The Under 16s*') in 1974, a text republished in 2005.

"Sometimes I'll have as many as four boys – from eight to 14 years old – in my bed at the same time and I'll engage in the most exquisite lovemaking with them," he wrote of a visit to the Philippines in his 1985 journal *Un galop d'enfer* ('*Rushing Headlong*').

It's extraordinary to think that such casually expressed admissions of paedophilia could be published at all, let alone their author celebrated and decorated with some of France's highest cultural honours, but Matzneff not only enjoyed the trappings of fame, he was emboldened and even protected by them. For decades.

These are different times, however, and Matzneff's may be up; the catalyst for a coming reckoning arriving in the form that made him famous and that he treasures most.

"Does literature excuse everything?" is a question posed by Vanessa Springora in an explosive memoir published last month in France called *Le Consentement* ('*Consent*') in which she details how she was groomed and sexually exploited by Matzneff from the age of 14.

Now in her late 40s and the head of the French publishing house Éditions Julliard, Springora had met the writer when she was 13 years old and he was in his 50s at a dinner she attended with her mother, recently divorced from her father.

Matzneff, she wrote, immediately began bombarding her with attention; there was a string of letters and he took to waiting for her outside her school. Vulnerable, confused and traumatised by her parents' divorce, Springora believed she was in love with this charismatic, famous writer and spent her subsequent adolescence and much of her adult life conflicted by her belief that she had consented to his abuse. She writes that she was in love with Matzneff – until she discovered by reading his work that she was not the only young object of his emotional and physical attentions.

Springora doesn't intend pressing charges but prosecutors in Paris have opened an investigation nonetheless. The statute of limitations on crimes such as sexual abuse of minors was extended recently in France from 20 years to 30 but that's still too late for Spingora.

In addition, French laws regarding rape are notoriously woolly and while it is illegal for an adult to have sexual contact with a minor under the age of 15 it's always been incredibly difficult to obtain a successful rape conviction. While in most equivalent countries sex with a minor is automatically rape because the victim is too young to give consent, there is no such legal framework in France. Proof must be established of constraint, menace, violence and surprise and that can be a surprisingly tricky thing to do: in 2017 a man was acquitted after impregnating an 11-year-old girl because the jury considered none of those criteria had been met (he was later convicted on appeal).

"I hope I can add a small brick to the edifice currently being constructed around issues of domination and consent," said Springora in January, "which are always linked to the notion of power."

The Matzneff case has France agog. Leading French writers have always been regarded as, if not exactly above the law then as a member of what's effectively an aristocracy, an establishment, a lay royalty that enjoys a broadly accepted near-amnesty on many matters, notably sexual ones.

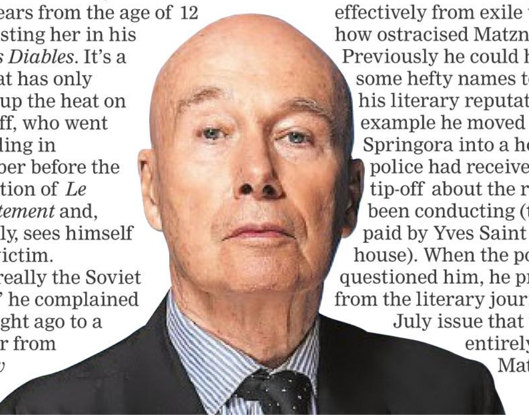
It's an indulgence with a murky past drawing in some surprisingly high-profile names. The 1968 student uprisings were partly responsible for reinforcing these mores in the modern era: with its slogan "It is forbidden to forbid" the movement's desire for freedom and equality went as far in some quarters as calling for the abolition of laws regarding the age of consent. As late as 1977 Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Roland Barthes signed a letter defending men charged with having sex with underage boys and girls that was published in *Le Monde*.

Recent global events, particularly the #MeToo movement, are beginning to catch up with the French cultural elite, however. Last month the film director Christophe Ruggia was charged with sexual assault of a minor by a person of authority after the actress Adèle Haenel claimed in interviews in November that Ruggia had sexually harassed her for three years from the age of 12 after casting her in his film *Les Diables*. It's a case that has only turned up the heat on Matzneff, who went into hiding in November before the publication of *Le Consentement* and, naturally, sees himself as the victim.

"It's really the Soviet Union," he complained a fortnight ago to a reporter from the *New York Times* who had tracked him down to his hotel. "Come on Matzneff, to the Gulag."

He'd already sent a handwringing statement to the French magazine *l'Express* speaking of the "exceptional love" he and Springora had enjoyed. "No, this is not me, this is not what we experienced together and you know it," he wrote addressing her directly, despite insisting he had not and would not read *Le Consentement*.

That he was making these statements effectively from exile was symbolic of how ostracised Matzneff has become. Previously he could have called upon some hefty names to protect him and his literary reputation. In 1986 for example he moved himself and Springora into a hotel because the police had received an anonymous tip-off about the relationship he had been conducting (the hotel bill was paid by Yves Saint Laurent's fashion house). When the police finally questioned him, he produced a cutting from the literary journal *Matulu* whose July issue that year was given over entirely to tributes to Matzneff.



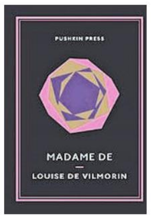
PARIAH: Gabriel Matzneff

Photo: Getty Images

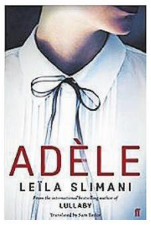
VANESSA SPRINGORA
Consentement
VANESSA
SPRINGORA

SENSATION: A woman reads *Le Consentement* (*The consent*) by Vanessa Springora Photo: Getty Images)

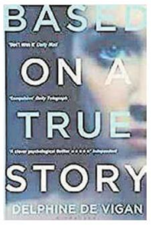
FIVE GREAT BOOKS BY FRENCH WOMEN



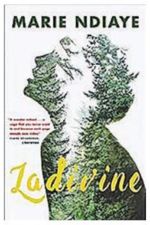
MADAME DE
Louise de Vilmorin
(Pushkin Press, £10)
Louise de Vilmorin lived a life. Married to a Hungarian count, she enjoyed extra-marital relationships with Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Orson Welles and André Malraux but regarded the British diplomat Duff Cooper as the love of her life. This is his translation of de Vilmorin's ingenious novel about a pair of earrings that find their way back to the owner who sold them and claimed they were lost via a chain of extra-marital chicanery.



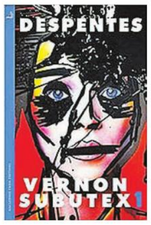
ADÈLE
Leïla Slimani (Faber & Faber, £12.99)
A respected journalist living in an amazing Paris apartment with her surgeon husband and young son, Adèle seems to have it all. Yet a mixture of boredom and sex addiction fires a string of affairs and one-night stands. A pacy, moving and important portrait of addiction, sexuality and a woman's quest to just feel alive inspired by the Dominique Strauss-Kahn scandal, this is a book that seeks to wrest sexual power back from men.



BASED ON A TRUE STORY
Delphine de Vigan, trans. George Miller (Bloomsbury £8.99)
With her teenage children packed off to college and her journalist partner Francois abroad, Delphine is a novelist bearing not so much a resemblance as the exact identity of the author. She meets an impeccably-mannered, elegant ghostwriter who inserts herself into Delphine's life and chips away at her will to write and, by extension, exist. Highly original and deeply unsettling.



LADIVINE
Marie Ndiaye
(MacLehose Press, £9.99)
An absorbing tale of guilt and redemption, Ladivine follows three generations of women. Clarisse is a black woman married to a white man in France who is so ashamed that her mother works as a cleaner she pretends to her own daughter that she is an orphan. A tumultuous run of events turns the focus on the lie in a moving novel of shame and alienation.



VERNON SUBUTEX 1
Virginie Despentes, trans. Frank Wynne (MacLehose Press, £8.99)
Shortlisted for the Man International Booker Prize in 2018 this is a funny, sharp novel that skewers modern France with a merciless wit and sparkling intelligence. The eponymous Vernon is the former owner of legendary Bastille record shop Revolver, big in the 1980s "when people still took the trouble to pretend that being was more important than having" but fallen on hard times until a curious opportunity presents itself.

"This unrepentant seducer who defines himself as a mix of Dorian Gray and Count Dracula, has always astonished me by his extreme taste for rigour and by the density of his thought," wrote no less a figure than the president of France, Francois Mitterrand. "The spontaneity of his judgement expressed in his limpid style is allied with an insistence on truth that often leads him outside the boundaries of what is considered ordinary."

Faced with such a ringing endorsement from the highest office in the country the tip-off was dismissed as the work of a literary rival jealous of Matzneff's standing despite the evidence of photographs and correspondence that had accompanied it. The following year the Académie française gave Matzneff the Prix Mottart for creative literature.

In 1990 he made one of his regular appearances on the literary discussion television programme *Apostrophes* where he boasted of the sexual conquest of minors detailed in his book *Mes amours décomposés* ('*My Decomposed Loves*') including the young Filipino boys he described as "a rare spice".

Presenter Bernard Pivot and other panellists, including a Catholic campaigner for fidelity in marriage, chortled along until the one non-French guest on the panel, Quebecois broadcaster and writer Denise Bombardier, declared that the discussion was making her feel she was on a different planet. She spoke out for the need to protect the children involved and labelled Matzneff "pathetic" – enough to have her dismissed afterwards as sexually frustrated and labelled a "bitch" in mainstream French media. Pivot responded to the footage being shared on social media last month by tweeting, "In the 1970s and 1980s literature came before morality; today, morality comes before literature. Morally, that's progress. We're all more or less the intellectual and moral products of a country and, above all, an era."

VICTIM: French writer Vanessa Springora Photo: Contributed

Wishy-washy dismissals like this might not be enough to save Matzneff this time. Last month French prosecutors raided the offices of the venerable publishing house Gallimard and seized a number of his books. Gallimard and two other publishers announced they were dropping Matzneff from their roster of authors. A grace and favour literary stipend was removed and the French Ministry of Culture announced they were re-examining two major literary awards he received from them during the 1990s. Last Tuesday Remy Heitz, Paris's chief prosecutor, confirmed that his enquiries "will seek to identify other possible victims who could have suffered violations of the same nature, in France or abroad". The following day Matzneff was formally charged in absentia with promoting the sexual abuse of children.

With an irony that can only be described as delicious, it was a 2013 attempt by influential friends in the publishing industry to secure the financial and reputational future of their literary lion that may have caused his past to finally catch up with Gabriel Matzneff.

Despite a prodigious literary output, in the early part of the last decade he was struggling to make ends meet and a vigorous campaign in the corridors of literary power saw him awarded the Prix Renaudot, an award considered the literary equal of the Prix Goncourt.

Watching Matzneff hailed by the great and good of an industry in which she had fought hard for her place as one of its most influential women turned out to be the last straw for Vanessa Springora. She knew she had to act, the question was how. The legal route could be tricky, she knew, which is why she decided to act in the most appropriate manner of them all.

"For so many years, my dreams have been filled with thoughts of murder and revenge," she writes in the introduction to *Le Consentement*, which she began writing immediately after Matzneff's Renaudot award. "Then one day the solution finally presented itself before my eyes. To draw the hunter to his own trap: to lock him up in a book."

a poem for europe

JOHN POWELL is a social scientist specialising in natural resource governance issues at the University of Gloucestershire. He currently spends his time wondering how long it will be before we are able to re-join our neighbours in Europe

THE FULL ENGLISH

If the jam refused to leave the spoon (like Grandma's did)
because of disenchantment with the porridge,
and the mustard were to suddenly demand
it must always take the centre place,
to enable full admiration of its essence,
we'd be in a sorry state.
And if the salt proclaimed it would no longer stand
side-by-side, together with the pepper
through good times and the bad,
we would have to re-negotiate the layout,
each time we set the table.

If coffee beans started agitating against the harshness
of the grind and, to publicise their bitterness, made clear
they could not partake in any cream-led coalition;
and tea leaves, in solidarity, and for fear of looking weak
confided, indiscreetly, about their revulsion
at the merest hint of milk,
how monochromatic our lives would become
without the dawn aroma, mixed just the way we like it.

If the bread, sensing opportunity, ceased all cooperation,
by announcing it would no more
permit the spread of any form of grease
upon its coarsely textured surface,
our pleasure from the mix of rough and smooth together
would be forever lost, leaving us
to masticate in misery the dry cracked wheat
with tongues unsullied
by the silky feel of golden yellow fat.

If eggs were to make it known, through a simple press release
that they would no longer seek out the company
of streaky bacon slices, or share their space with thick
black pudding slabs, following legal advice;
and if baked beans, taking offence, refused
to occupy their usual place sprawled across the toast,
instead demanding separation in bowls of gleaming white,
what pleasure would be left in breakfast?
Not much,
and we would have to spend our mornings keeping things apart
while the washing-up would multiply, exponentially.

A poem for Europe is edited by Briony Bax, Poetry Editor. Submit your poems to poetryeditor@theneweuropean.co.uk

AMBIT

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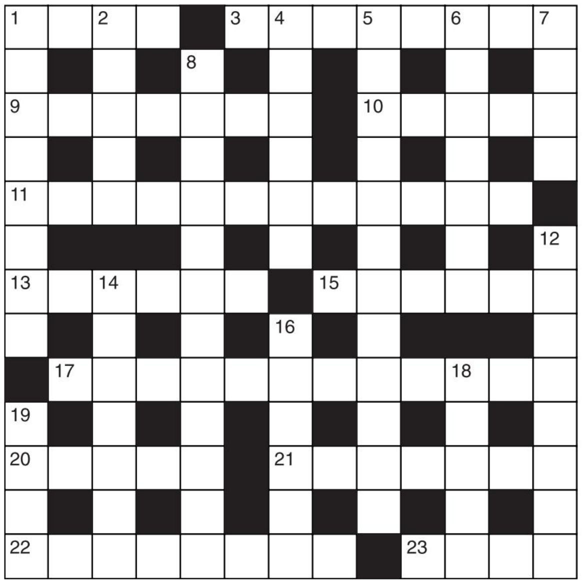
Cryptic crosswords sponsored by DORMONT ESTATE LIVING IN BALANCE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT www.dormontestate.com

Cryptic 1

Across
1. Animals one ought to be fond of (4)
3. Fitting it wrongly due to natural ability (8)
9. Landlord's correspondence? (7)
10. Cheat to become an instructor (5)
11. Older relations who make wonderful mothers and fathers? (12)
13. He pays rent for article in temporary home (6)
15. Fled on caress (6)
17. Tense ring rightly reasoning it is needlessly repetitive (12)
20. Sewer in which inland rainwater goes (5)
21. Does it tell us how many customers are served here? (7)
22. Shaken to have been first from the beginning (8)
23. The hut was shortly in her possession (4)

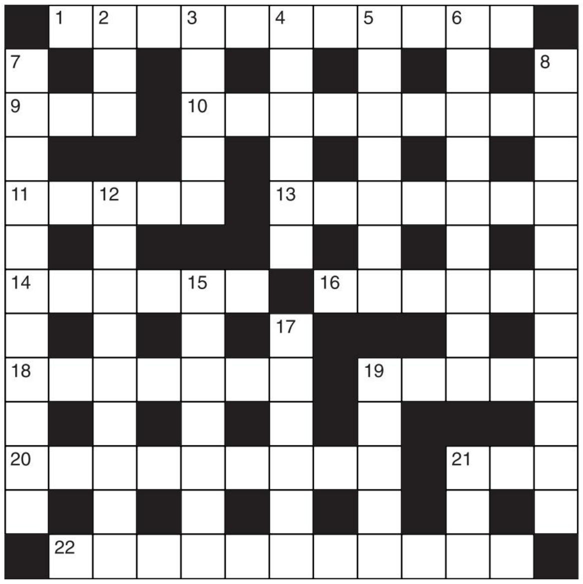
Down
1. Representative and semi-nude envoy (8)
2. Additionally it would be unusual if it were ordinary... (5)
4. ... as plot has to do with mail service (6)
5. Having final result during extensive chase, perhaps (2,3,4,3)
6. Duet can be ruined never being put on the stage (7)
7. Resounding noise from the choral society (4)
8. What makes following so beastly? (4,8)
12. Brought up properly in spring? (4-4)
14. Most ran a second time up to the falls (7)
16. Development is likely to be forced under it (6)
18. This fastener has a disadvantage (5)
19. Chances at which there's no agreement (4)



Cryptic 2

Across
1. They give the exact time to cease guard duties (11)
9. Peculiar dances when the bachelors are missing! (3)
10. In American money I have the urge to accomplish things (9)
11. Attack on radio equipment (5)
13. Was in a fearful frame of mind? (7)
14. The girl sounds like a star (6)
16. Place an order for goods in the depression (6)
18. Showing concentration in decimals before putting the point! (7)
19. One of the ways known to church-goers (5)
20. Playful, but likely to be catty later on! (9)
21 Across & 2 Down. Two pig-stealers, likely to get beaten! (3-3)
22. It enables many types to make an impression in the papers (8,3)

Down
2. See 21 Across.
3. Indicate a single addition to the score (5)
4. Agree to surrender the account first (6)
5. A restaurant full of cutlery! (7)
6. Bad performers? (4-5)
7. Witchcraft (11)
8. Capital sources of water? (11)
12. He may well have good looks (9)
15. Travelling light, maybe! (7)
17. A contrivance of French wickedness (6)
19. Thomas is below a Greek mountain (5)
21. Invert the fruit barrel (3)



Crossword solutions

Cryptic 1
Across: 1 Deer; 3 Aptitude; 9 Letters; 10 Teach; 11 Grandparents; 13 Tenant; 15 Fondle; 17 Tautological; 20 Drain; 21 Counter; 22 Startled; 23 Shed.
Down: 1 Delegate; 2 Extra; 4 Postal; 5 In the long run; 6 Unacted; 7 Echo; 8 Herd instinct; 12 Well-bred; 14 Niagara; 16 Cloche; 18 Catch; 19 Odds.

Cryptic 2
Across: 1 Stopwatches; 9 Rum; 10 Incentive; 11 Onset; 13 Dreaded; 14 Stella; 16 Indent; 18 Intense; 19 Aisle; 20 Kittenish; 21 Tom; 22 Printer's ink.
Down: 2 Tom; 3 Point; 4 Accede; 5 Canteen; 6 Evil-doers; 7 Broomsticks; 8 Headstreams; 12 Spectator; 15 Lantern; 17 Device; 19 Athos; 21 Tun.

Sudoku solutions

Medium 1

9	3	5	7	8	1	2	6	4
8	7	2	3	6	4	9	5	1
4	6	1	5	2	9	7	8	3
3	1	8	6	5	7	4	2	9
5	9	6	4	3	2	8	1	7
7	2	4	9	1	8	6	3	5
2	5	9	8	7	3	1	4	6
6	8	7	1	4	5	3	9	2
1	4	3	2	9	6	5	7	8

Medium 2

5	1	7	2	4	3	8	9	6
8	3	6	1	7	9	5	2	4
2	9	4	8	6	5	3	7	1
1	7	8	5	2	6	4	3	9
4	6	3	7	9	8	2	1	5
9	2	5	3	1	4	6	8	7
7	5	1	4	8	2	9	6	3
6	4	2	9	3	7	1	5	8
3	8	9	6	5	1	7	4	2

Hard 1

8	5	9	4	3	6	1	2	7
6	1	3	2	7	9	4	8	5
4	2	7	5	8	1	6	3	9
1	3	8	9	2	7	5	6	4
7	4	5	8	6	3	9	1	2
2	9	6	1	4	5	3	7	8
9	6	4	7	1	2	8	5	3
3	8	2	6	5	4	7	9	1
5	7	1	3	9	8	2	4	6

Hard 2

5	4	9	6	2	1	7	3	8
3	2	6	4	8	7	5	9	1
8	1	7	3	9	5	6	4	2
9	6	4	2	7	8	3	1	5
1	7	3	5	4	9	2	8	6
2	8	5	1	6	3	9	7	4
7	5	1	8	3	2	4	6	9
6	9	2	7	1	4	8	5	3
4	3	8	9	5	6	1	2	7

Numberfit solutions

1

■	■	5	8	7	7	1	3	■
■	9	9	2	1	3	■	2	9
5	2	■	7	5	6	4	4	8
8	5	9	■	2	■	9	6	1
1	6	6	3	■	3	7	7	6
6	4	4	■	2	■	5	5	6
6	9	9	7	1	3	■	6	3
5	3	■	8	5	6	4	4	■
■	9	8	7	7	1	5	■	■

2

■	■	5	2	7	2	5	6	8
■	1	4	4	6	6	3	■	4
4	6	3	■	2	6	7	6	9
7	5	6	■	■	■	9	9	3
5	9	4	7	2	3	2	3	5
4	9	4	■	■	■	8	4	3
3	2	2	1	3	■	4	3	9
0	■	1	3	9	2	6	6	■
4	5	9	8	4	6	6	■	■

Sudoku – medium 1

	3			8			6	4
8		2		6				1
	6		5		9			
		8	6			4		
5	9						1	7
		4			8	6		
			8		3		4	
6				4		3		2
1	4			9			7	

Sudoku – medium 2

		7		4	3		9	
			1			5		4
2		4		6			7	
	7				6			9
4		3				2		5
9			3				8	
	5			8		9		3
6		2			7			
	8		6	5		7		

Sudoku – hard 1

			4		6	1		
		3						
	2			8		6		9
1			9		7			4
		5				9		
2			1		5			8
9		4		1			5	
						7		
		1	3		8			

Sudoku – hard 2

	4			2	1	7		
3			4					
		7						2
	6		2		8			5
1								6
2			1		3		7	
7						4		
					4			3
		8	9	5			2	

Numberfit

Fit the listed numbers into each grid.

■	■							■
■						■		
		■						
			■		■			
				■				
			■		■			
						■		
		■						■
■							■	■

■	■							
■							■	
			■					
			■	■	■			
			■	■	■			
					■			
	■							■
							■	■

Numberfit 1

2 digits: 29 – 45 – 52 – 53 – 59 – 63
3 digits: 361 – 556 – 644 – 736 – 787 – 827 – 859 – 961
4 digits: 1663 – 2157 – 3776 – 4975 – 7152 – 9649
5 digits: 85644 – 99213
6 digits: 581665 – 587713 – 699713 – 756448 – 981663 – 987715
8 digits: 32467564 – 92564939

Numberfit 2

2 digits: 24 – 26
3 digits: 138 – 266 – 394 – 439 – 463 – 494 – 756 – 762 – 843 – 993
5 digits: 26769 – 32213
6 digits: 139266 – 144663 – 165992 – 693436
7 digits: 4598466 – 4754304 – 5272568 – 8493539
9 digits: 537928466 – 543644219 – 594723235

THE COLOURFUL CODE FOR NAMES

PETER TRUDGILL on the surprisingly wide array of surnames derived from colours

Football fans will know that Kevin De Bruyne, *pictured*, is the brilliant midfielder who plays for Manchester City as well as for the Belgian national team. They may not all be quite so familiar with other foreign soccer stars such as the Spanish international left-back Alberto Moreno, the German full-back Christopher Braun, the French defender Arnaud Lebrun, or the American midfielder Carli Lloyd – she has played for the USA women's international team nearly 300 times. Interestingly, all of these players carry essentially the same surname as the former Manchester United and England defender, Wes Brown.

The words *bruin*, *moreno*, *braun*, *brun* and *llwyd* mean 'brown' in, respectively, Dutch, Spanish, German, French and Welsh. De Bruyne literally means 'the brown one'. Like the other names, it was originally a nickname given to people because of the colour of their hair or because of their darker-than-usual complexion. In mediaeval times, when family names began to be established and passed on from generation to generation, the nickname turned into a surname. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland*, almost 400,000 people in Great Britain were recorded in the 2011 census as having the family name Brown or Browne.

Our English-language surname Black (including Blake, Blaik and Blaikie) is also in origin a byname referring to a person's complexion. In predominantly pale-skinned northern Europe, the nickname – later a family name – signified that a person had skin of a somewhat darker hue than most other people. The Austrian-born conductor Rudolf Schwarz, who was principal conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, had the equivalent name in German. The surname of Tom Dezwarte, the Belgian road-racing cyclist, also means 'the black one' in Dutch. And the corresponding French word appears in the family name of J.B. Lenoir, the American blues singer.

Those of us who learnt to play the piano as children may remember struggling through exercises written by the Austrian composer Carl Czerny, whose name means 'black' in Czech. The equivalent and very similar surname in Polish is Czarny. The corresponding adjective in Scottish and Irish Gaelic is *dubh*, which can be seen in the surnames Duff, Duffy and Macduff. And from the world of cricket, the Australian international fast-bowler Andrew Fekete's family name means 'black' in Hungarian.

Another cricketer with a colour-based family name is the former England fast-bowler Darren Gough, whose surname comes from Welsh word for 'red', *coch*. Like Gough, the English-language surname Read or Reade also indicates that the original bearers of the nickname had red hair or a ruddy complexion; the family names Rudd and Ruddy imply the same thing. The Dutch surnames Rood, De Rood(e), Roode and Roodt also all derive from the word for the colour red. Le Rouge or Lerouge have the same origin in French, and Rosso is the equivalent name in Italian.

Words for the colour white are also frequently employed as surnames, having originally been used as a nickname for people who had a pale complexion or fair hair, or perhaps who were prematurely grey. In Great Britain, the surname White or Whyte is not as common as Brown, but it is common enough, with about 140,000 bearers in the 2011 census. Equivalent family names in other languages include Leblanc in French and De Wit in Dutch, both meaning 'the white one', as well as German Weiss, Italian Bianco, Welsh Gwyn, and Polish Biały, which simply mean 'white'.

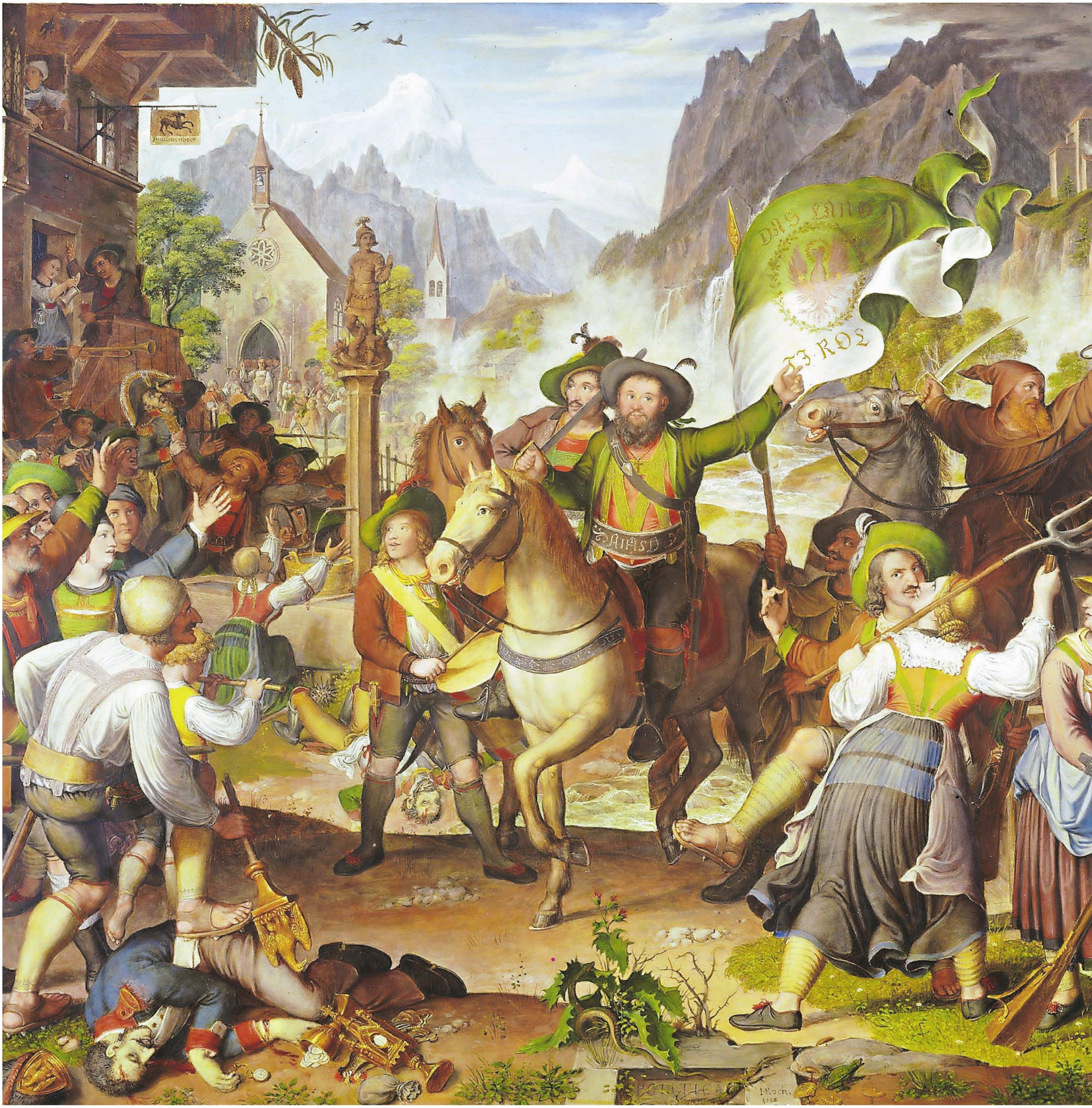
There are also a handful of people in Britain with the name Yellow, a nickname also based on hair colour. More common is the surname Bowie or Bowey, which comes from the Scottish Gaelic word *buidhe*, 'yellow', which has the same origin.

Happily, however, the family name Green or Greene did not come about because early bearers of the name had green hair or a sickly complexion – it was because they lived near the village green.

HANDFUL

***Handful* was obviously originally two words, *hand full*. This can be seen from the fact that the plural used to be *handsful*. But in the 1500s some people started writing *handfuls*, and since the 19th century this has been normal usage, showing that *handful* is now very definitely just a single word.**

Photo by Visionhaus/Getty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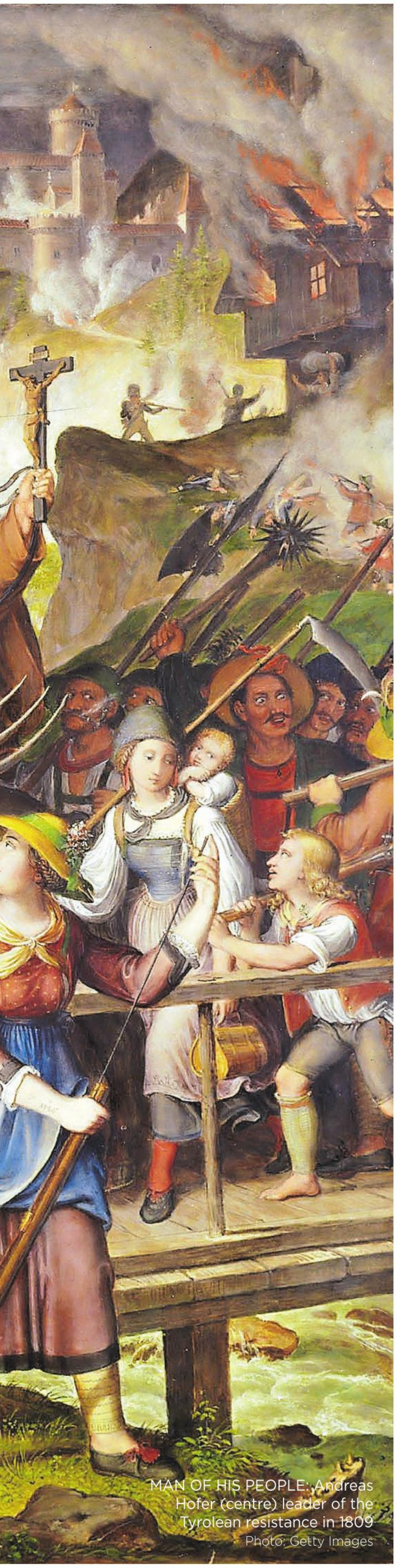

MAN OF HIS PEOPLE: Andreas Hofer (centre) leader of the Tyrolean resistance in 1809
Photo: Getty Images

GREAT EUROPEAN LIVES

BY CHARLIE CONNELLY

#136 ANDREAS HOFER

NOVEMBER 22, 1767 – FEBRUARY 20, 1810

"You've been to mass; you've had a schnapps. Now forward in the name of God!"

As battle cries go it's an unusual one but for innkeeper-turned-spearhead Andreas Hofer it was the perfect cry with which to lead his motley mix of trained soldiers and pitchfork-wielding farmhands against the forces of Napoleon.

This citing of two key facets of Tyrolean culture worked, too, inspiring Hofer's forces to defeat their better trained, better equipped opponents in a number of battles and pull off several ingenious guerrilla-style actions in an attempt to preserve their way of life and worship. It was enough to make Hofer a folk hero across Europe even during his own lifetime: even contemporary British newspapers evoking ancient memories of Robin Hood by describing him admiringly as "a tall, well-made, strongly built man [who] possesses much natural eloquence. He wears a broad, green Tyrolean hat with a long heron feather in it, his neck and a part of his breast open, and his dress that of a Tyrol peasant".

Emerging as he did at the height of Romanticism, Hofer had starry-eyed poets reaching for their pens to elevate him to the loftiest heights too.

"Of mortal Parents is the Hero born, by whom the undaunted Tyrolese are led?" wondered William Wordsworth in 1809 in one of several sonnets he dedicated to Hofer, "Or is it Tell's great Spirit, from the dead, Returned to animate an age forlorn?"

Hofer would animate much more than his own age. In 1893, more than 80 years after his death, the Austro-Hungarian emperor Franz Joseph travelled to Innsbruck to unveil a monument to Hofer, describing him as "a most noble embodiment of the Tyrolean spirit. He was great both in success and misfortune, a hero both in life and death".

Hoferian symbolism endured well into the 20th century: his name was lent to anti-fascist resistance groups during the Second World War and when Italian nationalists in the southern Tyrol wanted to make a bold statement to their German-speaking counterparts in 1960, they blew up a monument to Hofer placed on the site of his execution in Mantua.

Yet for all Wordsworth and the rest's determination to hold him up as the personification of pan-European popular revolution and the quest for individual liberty, Andreas Hofer wasn't fighting for that. He tweaked the nose of Napoleon not out of revolutionary fervour but fierce loyalty to the Habsburgs, the Catholic church and the Tyrolean way of life. His motivation wasn't a dreamer's desire to win freedom for the common man, it was a grim-faced battle to preserve the status quo.

Hofer was an innkeeper, wine merchant and cattle dealer who kept the Sandhof Inn, an establishment popular with travellers at St Leonhard in Passeier that had been in the Hofer family for generations. Always keenly involved with local issues he was elected to the Tyrolean Landtag regional assembly in 1791.

He took up arms for the first time in 1803, fighting against Napoleon's army in the War of the Third Coalition where he rose to become a militia captain in the Austrian army. Defeat in that war, most notably at the Battles of Ulm and Austerlitz, saw the Tyrol ceded to French ally Bavaria under the 1805 Treaty of Pressburg.

The Bavarians introduced a harsh system of taxes and military control to the region with resources exploited and military conscription becoming mandatory. The Tyrol had been a part of the Holy Roman Empire since the 14th century; for more than 300 years its people had lived, worked and worshipped contentedly under Habsburg rule, their lives regulated by the rhythms of the seasons and the rituals of the Catholic church. Tradition and piety forged the Tyrolean way of life and when the Bavarians threatened significant change it was Hofer, the impassioned innkeeper, the devout militia man, who took up the challenge.

Having travelled to Vienna in 1809 to gain approval from emperor Francis I to commence resistance activities against the occupying force, Hofer began a peripatetic few weeks spreading the word and gathering fighters to the Tyrolean cause throughout the region, travelling so much he took to signing letters "Andreas Hofer, wherever I am".

Once this groundwork had been laid the rebellion began on April 9, 1809. The previous night sacks of sawdust had been emptied into the Inn river, a prearranged signal to begin the insurrection that was carried by the waterway all the way through the valley. Church bells echoed between the mountainsides, signalling volunteers to gather with muskets, swords, even farm implements, in a rising so swift and well-organised the Bavarian units were soon overpowered and even a column of French troops that happened to be passing through the area was routed. Within two days Hofer's forces had taken Innsbruck; shortly afterwards the anticipated French reinforcements were also seen off at the first Battle of Bergisel, a hill outside the city.

Within weeks of the victory Hofer could call upon a Tyrolean force 20,000 strong, enough to defeat the reinforced Bavarian army at a second Battle of Bergisel at the end of May. Assuming this would be the end of the matter, having been promised by the emperor that Austria would stand by the Tyroleans, Hofer returned to his inn and resumed serving wine and schnapps to weary travellers.

His rebellious work was far from done, however: within a few weeks Napoleon's army had defeated the Austrians at Wagram after which Tyrol was again ceded to Bavaria. This time Napoleon sent 40,000 troops to the region with explicit instructions to retake Innsbruck and reassert Bavarian control of the region once and for all. Hofer put down his glass cleaning cloth and returned to the fray. The third Battle of Bergisel on August 13 raged for a strength-sapping 12 hours after which, as the sun set behind the hill, the Tyrolean forces hauled themselves wearily from the battlefield victorious again.

This time, instead of returning to life as an innkeeper Hofer became imperial commandant of the Tyrol in the name of the emperor of Austria. He devised a raft of new laws and even minted new currency. At the end of September Francis pinned a medal to his chest and assured him again that Austria would never abandon the Tyrol.

That promise lasted barely a fortnight. Among the terms of the punitive Treaty of Schönbrunn, signed by Austria on October 14, Tyrol was yet again made part of Bavaria. Stung by what he saw as the emptiness of his emperor's words Hofer, removed as commandant but granted safety under amnesty, returned to Passeier unable to face another inevitably hollow victory against the invading forces. Enough blood had been spilled, enough lives had been lost in the name of victories negated almost immediately by distant diplomats at the scratch of a pen.

Brooding didn't come easily to Hofer, however, so when on November 12 rumours reached the inn that Austrian forces had fought back and won important victories he found himself energised again, charging out of the mountains to take on the invaders, gathering his soldiers as he went.

The rumours turned out to be false. His forces, much reduced in numbers, were easily defeated and Hofer was forced into hiding, a price on his head as he hunkered down for the winter in a remote hut high in the mountains. He hid for ten weeks until Franz Raffl, a neighbour living close to the Hofer inn, found the pull of 1,500 guilders too difficult to resist and betrayed the Tyrolean leader's location to the Bavarians. After ten weeks on the run he was captured by Italian troops and sent to Mantua for court martial.

According to legend the military court, hastily convened in an effort to head off mass protests, had not intended to impose a capital sentence until a communication arrived from Milan in which Napoleon himself instructed, "give Hofer a fair a trial, then shoot him". In classically heroic fashion the Tyrolean leader faced the firing squad without a blindfold, refused to drop to his knees and pre-empted the commander of his executioners by giving the order to fire himself. To this day the official anthem of the State of Tyrol is *Zu Mantua in Banden* ('*To Mantua in Chains*'), also known as the *Andreas-Hofer-lied*. It's not so much a celebration of the Tyrol as the man who, from beard to heron feather, came to embody its rituals, rhythms and even the landscape itself.

WILL SELF

Multicultural Man ..

on Naples and ping-pong travel

My eldest son is heading off to Naples this week, to spend a few months in this storied city. He has a job teaching English in a language school, and he has a creative project of his own he wants to work on; furthermore, as a confirmed lover of all things Italian – in particular the *Mezzogiorno* – he wishes to experience being there freely, before the sun finally sets on our dream of European unity. His departure has summoned up my own memories of Naples – I went there about 15 years ago, at the behest of the late Bernardo Bertolucci, the film director, to research the life of the aristocratic Renaissance composer and uxoricide, Carlo Gesualdo, with a view to working on a script for a film.

I was in the city for about four days, walked everywhere, tracking back and forth across the streets lined with the celebrated *Bassi*, or 'basements' – small houses characteristic of the poorest districts, in which entire families do, indeed, live in the basement. I remember the narrow teeming alleys, hung with laundry – and the cavernous, dusty churches, in which the old gold of iconostasis loomed, and Sanmartino's lifelike *Veiled Christ*, seemed to gently respire. I stayed at a hotel in the Chiaia district, looking out over the Bay of Naples, with the Castel dell'Ovo hunkered down on its rocky islet in the wine-dark mid-distance. If anybody ever asks me if I've been to Naples – I recall these things, and a few others.

But I never went to visit Vesuvius or the ancient cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, baked into its lava flanks – and I never ventured further along the Amalfi coast – or offshore to Ischia or Capri. Moreover, while I might have talked at length to a Neapolitan fixer arranged by Bernardo, who was knowledgeable about the city, its inhabitants, their mores and culture, mine remained a superficial visit – a bare scratching of the surface of this immemorial palimpsest of a polity, which has lasted for millennia. True, I was nominally there for work – but I scarcely mixed my labour with Naples, rather, I was just another species of tourist, reducing a venerable place and its spaces to a series of commodities: Monopoly squares, I rented by the hour.

And when I look back over my European travels of the past quarter century or so, they mostly conform to this pattern: parachuted in by low-cost airlines, I've just about recovered from the discombobulation of jet travel in time to look at a few unfamiliar buildings, make believe there are no strangers – only friends I haven't met yet, walk about for a while, eat some slightly different food, conduct an interview or a book event of some sort then flown home. The strategies I've adopted to try to make these excursions seem more real and representative of the locations have been just that: strategies. Walking from the airport – or from the city centre out into the country; making sure to learn at least a smattering of the local language; staying with local people rather than in the null environments of international hotels – all of these have worked a bit, at the time.

But now I contemplate the possibility that it may, indeed, be closing time in the gardens of the west, I do indeed feel – following the rest of Cyril Connolly's famous formulation – little saving the quality of my despair, and the resonance of my solitude. Those pell-mell progressions, hopping from Heathrow to Naples, to Toulouse, to Lyons, to Vienna, to Berlin, to Prague, to Amsterdam, to Paris – and back again, at most a handful of days later, what have they won me? Nothing much. This has been no grand tour, from which I've returned laden with cultural capital and Ionic capitals with which to decorate my own landscape garden – nor have I stayed long enough, anywhere, to become steeped in its being the way a daube of beef is steeped in its winey sauce.

JUST PASSING THROUGH: One of the famous narrow streets of Naples Photo: Getty Images

Still, I can console myself to this extent: it isn't only in the realm of the human object that, in Oscar Wilde's memorable formulation, we always kill the thing we love: we've also killed the arcadia of our beloved continental playground not only with our myriad bitter looks and flattering words, but most especially with our carbon emissions – for all this pan-European ping-ponging of mine and yours, and so many others has coincided exactly with the period during which the climate emergency became an abject disaster for humanity. In the 23 years since the Kyoto Protocol was formulated, it's estimated that greenhouse gas emissions have equalled those occasioned by all preceding human activities. In other words: it's precisely when we woke up to the fact of anthropic climate change that humans began doing the irreversible damage – doing it with all those short-haul flights and meal deals and Amazon deliveries. So it is that I, you, and everyone one else can now feel the full force of Virgil's maxim: '*Vedi Napoli e poi muori*' – 'See Naples and die.'

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